

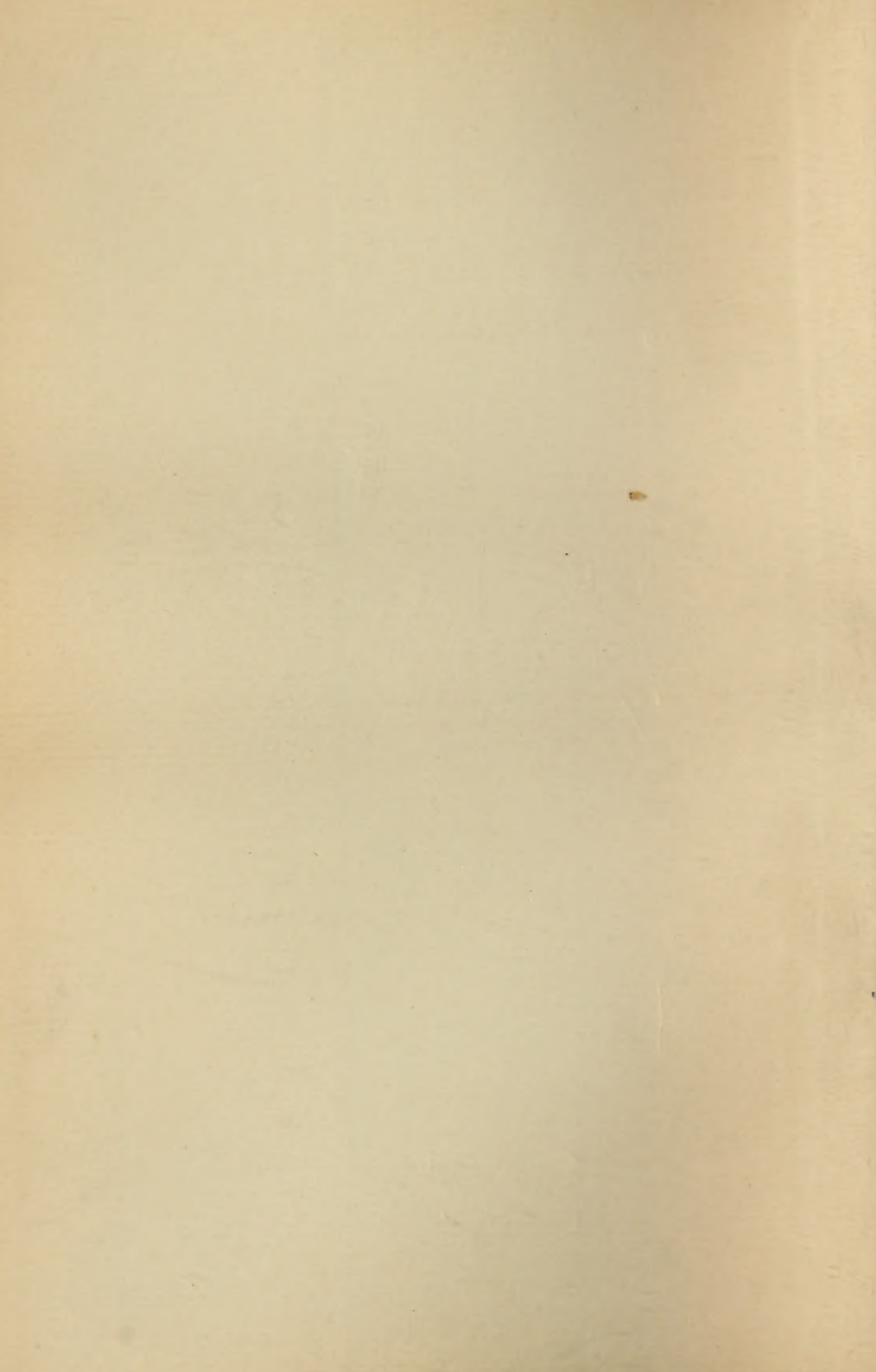
# THE HUMAN SOUL

A. VONIER O. S. B.











# THE HUMAN SOUL AND ITS RELATIONS WITH OTHER SPIRITS

BY

DOM. ANSCAR VONIER O. S. B.

ABBOT OF BUCKFAST

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## FOREWORD.

THERE is a great love for the things of the intellect observable amongst our contemporaries. It is commonly said that we live in an age of materialism. Yet no age takes greater interest in the things of the mind.

The theories I am giving to the public in the following modest work on the "Human Soul" have no originality. They are merely the views of the great Catholic philosophers and theologians, and foremost amongst them, of St. Thomas Aquinas.

The book is meant essentially for the educated lay mind. Its purpose is intellectual more than devotional.

My task has been to explain some of the philosophical truths of Scholasticism in as simple language as possible. Perhaps the chief defect of the book is this very simplicity and jejuneness of style. But the purpose of the book is served better by light than by brilliancy.



The book contains very few quotations, and still fewer references. The reason of this is that I am more intent on giving the spirit than the letter of Catholic philosophy.

There is a good deal of allusion to the theology of the Angels in this book on the Human Soul. This is unavoidable, as the theology of the Human Soul coincides in many points with the theology of the Angels.

Those whom I call "our masters" are chiefly St. Thomas Aquinas, the great thinker of the 13<sup>th</sup> century; Cardinal Cajetan, the Commentator on the *Summa theologiae*, in the 16<sup>th</sup> century; and Ferrariensis, the Commentator on the *Summa contra gentes*, of the same period.

Intellectual truth is always sure to do its own work. It only wants stating; there are always clear and unbiassed minds to be profited by it. It is this belief of mine in the efficacy of the unaided power of intellectual truth, that makes me hope that good may be done by efforts like the one of which the following pages are the embodiment.

*Buckfast Abbey*, October 1913.

ANSCAR VONIER, O. S. B., Abbot.

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## CHAPTER I.

### Nature of Spiritual Substances.

THE human soul is a spirit. It is called the lowest of spirits by the Catholic divines. This expression ought not to convey an idea of incompleteness; it ought not to make us consider the human soul as a being that is just superior to matter without its being a completely spiritual substance. On the contrary, it may be asserted with perfect theological accuracy, that the human soul is as much a spirit as God Himself, as much a spirit as any of the Angels of God. The term spirit is applied with equal appropriateness to God, to the Angel, and to the human soul. God, the Angel, and the human soul are all alike remote from matter; they are all utterly immaterial; they differ indeed through the power of intellect, but there is no difference in their respective freedom from the laws of matter.

It is therefore my first duty to give the definition of a spirit; I must attempt to give a short theo-



logical description of the spiritual substance, at the outset, as a kind of basis to start from. To think of the human soul as of a being half way between matter and spirit, is to materialise it, is to bring it within the possibilities of heredity and evolution.

The term spirit primarily has a negative value; it means total freedom from the laws of space and time; it means total absence of all that is called matter, of all that is organic life; it means thirdly complete lack of sensation or sensitive life generally, in the spirit-substance.

It may be safely asserted that freedom from the laws of space is the most popular, and the most common condition connected with a spiritual being, even in the most primitive mind. Beings superior to himself have always been endowed by man with wonderful powers to set at naught the laws and the impediments of space. It must be observed however, that popular imagination is quite satisfied with the gift of agility, of facile locomotion, for its spirits. This, of course, popular fancy would always think to be the primary spirit-power. The kind of freedom from the laws of space Catholic theology postulates for a spirit, is something far superior to mere agility, to mere facility of loco-

motion. A spirit not only moves freely within space, but he is absolutely superior to space. Space is non-existent to him. In fact, this superiority to space, which is the most popular spirit-attribute, is one of the hardest concepts of Christian metaphysics; it requires a highly philosophical mind to find pleasure in the concept.

Freedom from the laws of time has hardly found an echo in popular imagination; all nations have made their higher beings subject to the changes of numerical time; Catholic theology on the contrary considers time to be as much against spirit-nature as space itself; it does not deny duration, but it says that the duration of a spirit-nature has nothing in common with the beat and the division of human time. Yesterday, to-day, and to-morrow are not divisions for the spirit. If the acts and periods of a spirit's existence are at all classified, they are classified according to more or less intensity in thought, not according to more or less sidereal movements.

"Not so with us in the immaterial world:  
But intervals in their succession  
Are measured by the living thought alone,  
And grow or wane with its intensity."

NEWMAN, *Dream of Gerontius*.

Matter has been made as light and as bright as possible by popular imagination, for a spirit-nature; but I think it would be hard to find outside Catholic theology clear and definite notions of entirely immaterial substances; even in the Catholic Church it took men a long time to rest contented with the idea of a being intensely real and yet absolutely immaterial. Even so late a Doctor as St. Bernard did not dare to pronounce categorically on the subject. The lightness of spirit-substances is of course part of the popular view; it is perhaps the most cherished feature in the popular belief in Angelic spirits; but Catholic theology has raised the notion of the spirit to its highest level long ago. There is no matter in a spirit, not even matter of the most subtle kind. Even the incomprehensibly subtle ether of modern science would be like a dead weight, by comparison. For a long time already, in Catholic theology, spirit and matter have been oppositions, not indeed oppositions between good and evil, but incompatibilities of laws, incompatibilities in the respective modes of acting.

But freedom from matter is a small beginning, a thing which it ought not to be difficult to conceive, to adhere to with mental satisfaction. We may



even pride ourselves upon the ease with which we think of an entirely immaterial being, as we ourselves sigh for the day that will set us free from the fetters of our body. Freedom from sensation, complete lack of sensitive operations will be treated with less favour by our imagination, or even by our feelings. Both modern psychology and old Scholastic philosophy give to the sense-activities in man an exceedingly wide range. Things that are apparently of the highest order, in knowledge, and art, and sentiment, are not things of the spirit, but things of the senses, alike in the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas and in the modern researches in the domain of the brain. Activities coming under that category are as incompatible with the spirit-nature as a heavy bodily frame; and there only we shall find the spirit, where those activities give way to higher operations.

Coming now to the positive attributes of a spirit, to those perfections with which a spirit is endowed, and which make him what he is, even if there were no material Universe, I shall point out only a few for the present. A spirit's activity is all intellect and will; his power is will-power; his size is greatness of intellect. A spirit is in-

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corruptible, and therefore immortal, from the very principles of his nature; God might indeed annihilate a created spirit, but the annihilation would be as much a miracle as if material fire, whilst remaining fire, were deprived of the power of burning, through the intervention of God. A spirit has all his knowledge inborn or infused from above; a spirit sees everything by direct intuition; a spirit never goes back from a decision once taken; a spirit by his very spirit-nature knows all those things that are inferior to him, with the exception of the free acts of rational creatures; a spirit always acts to the full extent of his knowledge and his will-power.

These are some of the spirit-attributes constantly mentioned by St. Thomas Aquinas; the human soul must possess them all, if the human soul is considered to be a spirit.

The objection will arise at once: "There do not seem to be in the human soul any of those great marks, either negative or positive. Our soul is alive in our body now, and yet which of us could boast of such privileges?"

To this I reply: "The human soul must be considered in two totally different states: in the state of union with the body, and in the state of se-

paration from the body. The attributes mentioned above belong to the state of separation, to the eternal, the permanent state, not to the state of transitory union. How, with the absence of those high attributes, in the present state of union with the body, our soul still preserves its perfect spirit-nature, will be our special study in one of the following chapters (Chapter 7). What I want to make clear now is this, that no spirit in its permanent, I might almost say, in its normal condition, is without the qualities I have enumerated."

The doctrine that the human soul, though the lowest of spirits, is as truly a spirit as God Himself, lends itself to a few more considerations.

In the first place, it is there we are to find the reason why the human soul is truly and rightly called the image of God, is said to bear the resemblance of God, whilst the human body, or an animal, or a plant, or even the whole physical Universe, cannot be called properly the image of God. They are the marks of God's presence, of God's omnipotence; they give evidence of His infinite wisdom; but they cannot be said, with any propriety of language, to resemble Him. The soul, on the other hand, is a strict resemblance, an exact

likeness of God; this is no metaphor, it is an expression to be taken literally. And there should be little difficulty in taking the expression literally, if the word "spirit" applies, as we have said, with equal truth to God and to the soul. The soul shares God's immateriality and freedom from sensitive life to their full extent; those attributes (if negations may be called attributes) have the same meaning as regards God and the human soul. We shall see, in one of the following chapters, how this initial similarity between God and the soul, based on the one and the other being remote from matter, makes it possible for the soul to receive God's own Spirit, to be raised to a still higher similarity with Divinity, through supernatural grace. There is no such opening for matter (Chapter 39).

After stating that spirituality is possessed in equal shares by the highest and lowest spirit, the question now arises: How then do they differ? What will be their differentiating attributes? Above all, how can there be infinity of spiritual superiority for God, the Spirit of spirits, when my poor soul claims fraternity with Him? It is the hard fate of the theological writer, to be bound to start with the most abstruse points of his subject; the



description of his *dramatis personae* is the most difficult part of his task; and yet, the actors must be known to the reader. The causes of differentiation between spirit and spirit, in the assumption of there being inferiority and superiority amongst them, cannot be given unless we introduce highest metaphysical principles, and yet I feel I have already spoken abstruse things, more than is wise, in this first chapter. I must be content with an explanation, which, though perfectly true, is not the last word yet, in the matter. So let it be as follows: Spirits differ in natural perfection, through the unchangeableness and uniformity of their intellectual and volitive operations; or more palpably still, the higher spirit is the one to whom many objects for mind and will are like one object. An inferior spirit, when giving his attention and his love to a thousand different things, would have to do it through a thousand successive acts. A spirit of the next rank does it all through one act; and in doing it thus simultaneously his attention to every one of the thousand things, and his love for every one of them, are greater than with the spirit of the thousand distinct acts. The Angelic St. Thomas never tires of propounding this view, when there



is a question about the various degrees of spirit-nobility, and I hold that it is as perfect an explanation of hierarchical distinction as we could desire, for the present.

A theologian might propose the following difficulty to a tyro: "Which difference is the greater, the one between the soul and God, or the one between a material being and the soul?" Tyro's answer might be long in coming, as a solution of the problem cannot be obtained without a good share of the divine art of making a good logical distinction. On the one hand it would seem to a tyro that a soul is nearer to God than soulless matter is to the human soul. His reason is obvious; it is, because both God and the soul are spirits, in absolutely the same meaning. But on the other hand, there is in the tyro an innate opposition to making the difference between God and a creature not the greatest imaginable difference. Most likely, the Doctor would have to solve the knot himself, unless the tyro be a rising young theologian.

The Doctor would say: "The comparison cannot be made without first making an important distinction; you will find the solution of the problem in the

distinction there is between incompatibility and superiority. The soul is so different from matter because soul and matter are absolutely incompatible. They exclude each other entirely and for ever. Their respective modes of being are the direct opposite of each other. Between God and the soul, there is no such incompatibility in the modes of being. It could not be said that the way in which God has His perfections is in direct opposition to the way in which the soul has its own. Only with God it is an infinitely superior way of having them. Matter, on the other hand, exerts its activities in a manner that is the very contradictory of the soul's manner of acting. But the soul's attributes being those of a finite being, could not be infinitely superior to matter, though they are vastly superior."

To put the thing in a nutshell: the activities of the human soul are vastly superior to those of matter, however highly organised; at the same time, their respective modes of proceeding are in direct opposition. The activities of God are infinitely superior to the activities of the soul; but their respective modes of proceeding, far from contradicting each other, follow similar lines.

## CHAPTER II.

**Spirit and Matter.**

The most perplexing, as well as the most wonderful property of the human soul is this: the soul is found to be united with a body, with matter. How can two incompatibles be united in one person? For we have said that spirit and matter are incompatible.

Those that think have often been perplexed by the opposition and incompatibility between matter and spirit; and their perplexity, on the subject, has led them to conflicting conclusions. In the eyes of many, matter is not only incompatible with spirit, but also with spirituality, with higher moral life. Matter has been condemned as the source of all moral evil, if not as the very substance of moral evil. If we could but get rid of matter, we should be pure, we should be spotless in the eyes of God; we should be impeccable. Do not the saints, the ascetics, make it their life's task to rise above their material body, by ignoring it and by crushing it?

Latterly, *Christian science* has taken up the war-cry against matter, and its radical wickedness. But besides a war-cry, *Christian science* has a war-



ruse, worthy of the days in which Christian science was born. It treats matter as an illusion, as a nightmare. Get rid of the illusion, wake up from your bad dream, and matter is nowhere. You are all mind then.

Catholic theology, which is the most spiritual of all philosophies, has nothing in common with these premature efforts of turning man into mind, into spirit. It never found fault with matter; it never grumbled at its existence; it never looked upon it as upon an intruder. It loves matter as the innocent creature of God, and prays for its maintenance. Highest matter, the human body, is most dear to Catholic theology.

Opposition and incompatibility between matter and spirit is indeed the first point to be learned in our doctrine of the spiritual substances. But we are warned from the very start that the opposition is not like sanctity versus wickedness, like purity versus defilement; it is a psychological opposition, and all we have to say against matter is this: "Matter, even when full of life and sensation, lives and feels according to laws which, if laid on a spirit, would, ipso facto, destroy his spirituality. In themselves these laws are the expression of God's

will and wisdom. Later on, we shall see what is the real theological import of scriptural expressions like "the body of sin", "the law of sin that is in our members" (Chapter 27).

The consideration Catholic theology has for matter goes still further. In its highest state of organic perfection, matter is not only good, and very good in itself, but helps the spiritual substance; it is, in a way, indispensable to at least one spiritual substance, the human soul.

The first principle in Scholastic psychology is this: Spirit and matter are incompatible in their modes of acting.

The second principle, as important as the first, is this: The human body is raised to higher sensitive activities through the spiritual substance, the soul; and the soul, in its turn, is made perfect, in will and intellect, through those highly developed bodily senses.

We are not as yet asking ourselves this question: "How are soul and body united in man?" We suppose that union for the present; we must ask ourselves a question arising from what has been said already: "If there is such entire psychological opposition between matter and spirit, how do soul

and body come to be united for their mutual advantage?" That it is for their mutual advantage, Catholic theology holds with great tenacity. How then can they be of any use to each other, if body and spirit must for ever follow contradictory modes in their acting?

Leaving untouched, for the present, the mode of union between soul and body, I shall give briefly the Scholastic doctrine of that mutual influence of soul and body, surviving in the midst of their respective incompatibilities.

The soul benefits by its union with an organic, with a highly sentient body, because the sensations and perceptions of the body are for the soul, or better for the soul's intellect, the seeds of knowledge. The soul's intellect draws its knowledge from the storehouse of bodily senses. The intellect, of course, makes the sense-perceptions go much further, by means of generalisations and conclusions, than sensitive faculties ever would. But all the knowledge of the soul's intellect comes from the observation of the senses.

Now it is evident that the soul does not descend from its immateriality, does not depart from its spirit-state, by merely "taking in" the objects offered



to its knowing powers by the senses. The gain to the soul is there, in spite of matter and spirit incompatibilities; even it might be asserted, that it is there in virtue of that opposition, as through it the soul beholds things that are outside itself (Chapter 15).

The gain to the body, from the presence of the soul, is a more difficult problem. The soul may behold, as it were, the perceptions of the body, and make them food for intellectual abstraction; the body could never be said to receive knowledge from the soul, and thus have new sensations. Whatever happens in the soul is entirely spiritual, and therefore can never be apprehended by the body. The soul may apprehend the inferior thing, in a superior way; but senses could never reach mind. We must therefore find for the soul a way of being useful to the body, which does not consist in a communication of its own activities to the body.

A spiritual substance like the soul is to the bodily organism, in which it dwells, a principle of elevation. The spiritual principle whilst remaining spiritual has this power: it raises bodily senses to a higher plane, by a kind of creative causality of which there are other instances in the physical universe.

This point is of too great importance not to deserve a special chapter, which I shall entitle "Elevation" and in which I shall explain more fully how the bodily organism gains from being united with a purely spiritual principle.

For the present I content myself with pointing out the twofold way in which two incompatibles like matter and spirit are united for their mutual benefit. The spirit by its presence raises the organism to higher sensitive life. On the other hand, the senses of the organism are for the mind the source of its knowledge and love. Following entirely opposite laws in their mode of acting, matter and spirit may still be helpful to each other, may still be wedded together in one personality, owing to that reciprocal usefulness.

### CHAPTER III.

#### Soul and Spirit.

After considering the radical difference there is between matter and spirit, we have to speak of another difference, the difference between soul and spirit.

Nothing could be less in keeping with Catholic philosophy than to make the terms "soul" and

“spirit” synonymous. A vast class of souls are not spirits, and a vast class of spirits are not souls.

A soul may be a spirit; and vice-versa, a spirit may be a soul. There is not, between soul and spirit, the impassable gulf that there is between matter and spirit. Yet there is a vast world of souls that can never be spirits, as there is an immense world of spirits that could never be called souls, even metaphorically; it is against their nature to perform the functions of a soul, as it would be against the nature of most souls to perform the functions of a spirit.

Generally speaking, it may be said that a soul is not a spirit, and that a spirit is not a soul. The human soul is the only exception.

Speaking quite universally, spirit-functions are forever different from soul-functions. That spiritual substance which we call the human soul, has both spirit-functions and soul-functions, but it is through different parts of itself, or rather through different powers of the spiritual substance.

Every animal has a soul; it has a soul as truly as man; but its soul is not a spiritual soul, is not an immortal soul, but it is a soul, not only metaphorically, but in all strictness of philosophical language.



By soul, Catholic philosophy understands a principle of life and sensation for the body; the highest soul is the one that is the principle of highest sentient life. The human soul is the highest soul, not precisely because it is spirit, besides being a soul, but because sentient life in the human organism reaches a height, owing to the soul's presence, which is not reached in any other animal.

We shall soon come to the doctrine of our masters concerning the extent of sentient life in man. The thing in which the human soul differs from the ordinary animal soul is this: the ordinary animal soul cannot exist separate from the organism; it rises and falls with the organism. The organism that is quickened through it, is also its bearer; whilst the human soul is capable of an existence outside the body. The fall of the organism is not the fall of the soul; it survives the organism. But in that survival it only fulfils spirit-functions; when the soul is united with the organism, it has clearly spirit-functions, besides soul-functions; when severed from the organism, it has only spirit-functions; and its state is less complete, because part of its functions are suspended.

The question might be asked: "Is the human soul more properly a spirit, or a soul? In other words, is its soul-part more important than its spirit-part?" The answer must be, I think, that the spirit-part is predominant. It is of the family of the angels, though it may fulfil, in a higher way, the office of an animal soul. We must never forget that the human spirit has an innate or inborn capacity of being to a bodily organism the source of life and sensation.

Two definitions are possible. We might call the human soul a soul that has spirit-functions; or we might call it a spirit that has soul-functions. The second definition is truer, and will be found to answer for all possible states in which the human soul might find itself. But in order of time, the soul-functions precede the spirit-functions; what the soul does first, is this, to be to the body the source of higher sensations, and it is only gradually that it rises to pure spirit-functions. Human language, that speaks of the human spirit as a soul is fully justified, precisely because in this life, it is chiefly the soul-functions that force themselves upon our attention.

## CHAPTER IV.

**Soul and God.**

From what has been said, we ought to be prepared rather for overstating, than for understating, the soul's dependence on the body. Provided we safeguard the soul's spirituality and its power to have a separate existence, there is no dependence on the senses for its operations, which we need be alarmed at.

But a connection with the body which is actually a dependence on it, is for the spirit a unique position. The union between soul and body is beneficial to the soul; we have already asserted this. At the same time, it may be said that it is a source of danger to the soul, an occasion of moral loss. We feel almost instinctively that a spirit, in such a position, must be helped by God more than another spirit.

This is why St. Thomas is so ready to make grace a necessary element in the soul's perfection. Through grace, he says in so many words, the natural consequences of the soul's dependence on the body are corrected and counterbalanced. God is necessary to the soul in a way which is not

found elsewhere, precisely on account of this dependence of the spirit on matter. God is necessary to the soul's perfection, and if God is not in the soul, the soul is morally dead. It would seem that mere union with the body, without the presence of God in the soul, would be a kind of contamination to the soul, would place the soul morally in a state of imperfection, in a state of deprivation.

How the soul possesses God, how God has His presence in the soul, will be the matter of another chapter, the chapter on the Divine in the Human Soul.

What I am interested in making clear now is this, that the soul's condition requires God, if the soul is to be pure and happy.

Speaking broadly, we may say that it is beneficial to the soul, from the point of view of knowledge, to be united with the body, and that there is no shadow, no drawback to the union, from this point of view. It is an absolute good; it is universally true that the soul in the body knows better than the soul outside the body.

From the point of view of moral perfection, the union could never be called an evil, because the bodily organism helps greatly in the fulfilment of



moral perfection. But the union may be said to be an incomplete boon, whose very incompleteness may be an occasion of danger. Now this incompleteness is corrected, or as our masters say, healed, by the grace of God, and this is why God is more necessary to the soul than to any other spirit. It may be said that He is necessary as a remedy.

This need not scandalise us; we need not ask ourselves the question: "Why does God create a being so imperfect as to be in want of His grace, if it is to be at all complete?" The very concept of man is the concept of a compound of spirit and matter. The soul is, after all, the lowest spirit, the next best imitation of God's perfection, after the last angel. It is, so to speak, in the very essence of man, to be in want of God; God has not made him arbitrarily imperfect, but God has made him the being that is between matter and spirit; that such a being should be in want of God, is part of its nature, and therefore the position could not be considered to be something arbitrary.

There is absolutely nothing repugnant in the idea of God creating a being, whose very essence requires God's grace, in order that it should be

complete. The only thing we have to assume is this that the grace of God is at hand, whenever required.

When I speak here of the necessity of grace, for the human soul, coming from its dependence on matter, I do not use the term grace in the strictly theological sense of its being an entirely supernatural thing (Chapter 39).

By grace I mean additional helps given by God to the soul: what kind of helps they are, I need not discuss here; even an angel may receive supernatural grace, but an angel is not in need of any extra helps to make his nature perfect, whilst the human soul is in need of such helps.

## CHAPTER V.

### **Elevation, the Soul's Chief Office.**

The presence of the human soul in the body is essentially causative; that is to say, the soul is united with the body precisely because the soul is for the body the cause, the source of something, of some new reality, of some higher quality.

Union between spirit and matter, which would not be causative, on the part of the spirit, is unthinkable. The spirit is wedded to the body as long as it is

able to be to the body a causative power; if matter be such as not to be a fit recipient of that causative influence of the spirit, the union is, ipso facto, at an end.

It may be said therefore that the spirit's causative power, actually exerted on a fit material subject, is the only link that keeps the spirit tied to the body.

The moment the soul's causative influence on the body ceases, from lack of an appropriate subject, I mean normally constituted organic matter, the soul turns on itself, enters, ipso facto, upon the pure spirit-state.

This causative power of the soul on the body is, of course, something quite peculiar. It causes as an immanent principle, not as an external agent. Its causality is called by schoolmen a formal causality, as opposed to an efficient causality.

A simple instance from nature will illustrate my meaning.

A tree has life and growth through two distinct sets of causes, external causes, and internal causes. The external causes are numerous; sunshine and rain are the most obvious. They would be called the efficient causes, because they bring about results

in the tree, though they themselves are not a part of the tree. But it is evident that there are in the plant itself causes that make it what it is, that account for its own kind of life, and its own kind of growth. Those causes, whatever their nature, are called by the schoolmen "formal causes"; they are immanent, internal; they are part of the tree's constitution.

The import of the terms "form", "formal" will be made more clear in the chapter on the "Mode of Union".

Granted then that the human soul has a real causative influence on the bodily organism, we must be prepared for results, in keeping with the soul's work and energy. Our masters give to those results the generic name of "Elevation".

The soul, through its causative mode of presence, elevates the bodily organism with which it is united to a higher degree of sensitive life; moreover, it elevates the higher sensitive life to the purely intellectual plane.

I must observe, however, that the second result, the raising up to the purely intellectual sphere, is not commonly called Elevation; it is the result of a power which schoolmen call *Intellectus agens*, the



causative intellect. Elevation applies more properly to the first result. Yet, the principle is the same in both cases. It is a raising up in this double sense of leading up, first, to higher sensitive life, and then to purely intellectual life, the ordinary animal life being, as it were, the starting point.

To a thinker trained in Thomistic modes of thought, man is an animal, raised to the highest plane under the angelic, through an immanent principle, called soul. Man is above all a rational animal, an animal that is given the non-sensitive power of reasoning, through the soul.

It would seem as if the truest view of man were this, that in him we should see to what a height an animal nature can be raised by the Creator.

In order to raise it to the desired height, the Creator united a spirit with it, to be its spiritual heaven, its inherent cause of superior perfection.

The importance of this principle will justify another presentment of the same matter. Man has organs, very much like the organs of a highly developed animal. With his organs, he does immeasurably more than the animal. Thus, for instance, his brain produces results so entirely superior, to the brain-results of an animal, as to

make us think, that they are results not of an animal brain, but of a spirit. Our old masters, very wisely and reservedly, consider those results to be brain-results; only, for them, the human brain has been leavened, by the spirit; it has been elevated by a soul that is at the same time spirit.

Our old masters distinguish in man a threefold class of phenomena. The lowest are those phenomena in which man differs in no way from the animal; the highest are the phenomena which are the result of the spirit-part of the soul; they are pure spirit-functions; between those two regions there is a vast region of phenomena which belong to the body, are accomplished by a bodily organism; and yet they could never be accomplished by a bodily organism, unless this organism had been elevated or leavened by the presence of a spiritual substance, the soul; we mean, of course, a presence that is immanent.

For the sake of clearness, and on account of the importance of this division, I will give instances of these various classes of phenomena. Bodily pain, growth, assimilation-powers, sensation, passions of anger, jealousy, sadness, belong to the first class; they are common to man and to animal.

Abstract thoughts, such as mathematical or metaphysical thought, free will, conscience, in the sense of its being the Imperative of duty, against the allurements of pleasure, belong to the third, the highest region.

What I should call the middle region, is a class of phenomena that extends over much that fills up the human life. Sentiment, conjugal love, the appreciation of beauty, the readiness to see things, and act in the occurrences of every moment, are all matters that belong to the brain, but to the brain, elevated by the presence of a spirit. The animal is not capable of them, because they are too high for it, nor could the spirit perform them, because they are not immaterial operations. Operations of that class give evidence in favour of the existence of a spiritual substance in man, because no organism could rise so high, if there were not in it a principle that is higher than matter; but they are not the direct operations of the spirit.

We have to admit therefore, in man, a double series of phenomena that proclaim loudly the presence of an immaterial spirit in him.

The purely intellectual phenomena are a direct proof of an intellectual or spiritual soul, because

no intellectual operations could come but from a spiritual substance. It is the clearest and most direct evidence of the presence of a spirit in man. That exceedingly high sentient life in man, which we call the middle region of his life, is an argument in favour of a higher soul, used more frequently. How could we differ so greatly from animals if there were no higher principle in our organism? This appeal is fully justified; no difference in organisms between man and animal could account for the difference of the respective workings of their brains.

It has been the constant effort of materialists to point out the similarity between the human organism and the organism of the highly developed animals; but the greater the similarity, the greater the need for an elevating principle, as there would be no means otherwise of accounting for the extraordinary dissimilarity of operations in man and animal; but of that more later on (Chapter 15).

## CHAPTER VI.

### **Via Media, in Psychology.**

Catholic philosophy stands and falls with the doctrine of the spirituality of the human soul. At



the same time, Catholic philosophy is the born antagonist of every kind of idealism, that it to say, of every system of philosophy that does not make the bodily senses the source and origin of every kind of knowledge. For Catholic philosophy there are no direct communications with the spirit-world; there is no speaking with spirits that dwell in higher intellectual spheres. All that we know, we have either seen with our eyes or heard with our ears or felt with our hands.

*Nihil est in intellectu, quod non prius fuerit in sensu*: "There is nothing in the intellect which previously has not been in the senses", is the golden axiom of Scholastic philosophy. There is not one single exception to it.

On the other hand, Scholastic philosophy has risen to such heights of spirituality, as to scandalise the materialist and to irritate him.

It would be an easy task to prove how in everybody's case the Scholastic axiom proves to be perfectly true. I may search every corner of my mind, and I shall find that all my intellectual equipment has come to me through my bodily senses. In fact, when I think myself absorbed in abstruse thoughts, I find myself using, mentally,

words and images which the ear and the eye have furnished.

Evidently Scholastic philosophy has adopted a *via media* between rank materialism and idealism run wild. Scholastic philosophy endows the soul with a power no other philosophy recognises; it is called the power of abstraction. It would not serve the purpose of this book to enter into all the technicalities of this great problem. Stated briefly, the power mentioned is this: Material things contain more truth than appears to the eye. They are bearers of evidences of higher immaterial things. Now it is the mind's office to find out the intellectual truth revealed in the material object, and it is precisely this intellectual kernel contained in the material objects that is the food of our mind. It is possible for one mind to see more intellectual truth in the material objects than for another; but the keenest mind never knew anything that was not found in a material object. In other words, our intellect deals immaterially or spiritually with bodily and material things.

To such an extent is this true, that, at no stage of our intellectual development, is it possible for the intellect to do anything without the cooperation

of the senses, precisely because the senses furnish the intellect with the objects of its workings. Once more, not only does the intellect handle material objects intellectually, but the intellect has nothing else to handle; and, but for their presence, the intellect could have no act of its own.

It is of the utmost importance for us to understand that all our intellectual life must have directly for its object things that have been apprehended first by the senses, and that at no stage can the intellect free itself from the concurrence of the material object. If it did, it would be no longer the mind of a sentient being.

I do not say here that the intellect possesses or requires a bodily organ for its operation; it is intellect precisely because it has no such bodily organ; but what I say is this, that the intellect has no other objects to work upon than the objects provided by the bodily organs, that are lower than the intellect.

Thus it is perfectly clear how intellectual life may be disturbed or suspended through the disturbances or the suspensions of the organs. The parts affected are not the intellect, but the senses; and intellectual life has become impossible, or anyhow has been disturbed, precisely because there are dis-

turbances in the organs that bring to the intellect its objects of contemplation.

The everyday argument of materialists against the existence of an immortal soul is chiefly this: material causes, such as anæsthetics, succeed in putting an end to the highest intellectual life. How can there be in man a spirit superior to the body, if a small dose of gas brings most intense intellectual life to a standstill?

I answer that nothing warrants the conclusion of the materialist; his conclusion goes much beyond his premises. For there is just this possibility, that the mind has no other food for its operations than the impression furnished by the senses. Nothing in the whole range of philosophy is against the reasonableness of such a possibility. Therefore it is premature to conclude from the cessation of intellectual life, through the application of anæsthetics — to quote only one of the many causes — to the non-existence of a spirit in man. If sensitive impressions are the intellect's only field of action, it is obvious that, through a cessation of sensitive impressions, the mind must become inactive.

When we say that the intellect's field of action are the objects offered by the senses, we must



remind the reader of a remark already made, that sensitive life, in scholastic philosophy, has a wonderfully wide range. It goes to the extent of comparing, coordinating, and connecting material objects, according to certain visible and palpable laws of causality. We presuppose all this high work of senses. If, through some cerebral infirmity, this highest coordination of sensitive objects cannot take place, the mind, or the intellect, lacks its normal object; it cannot reason logically.

Let our brains be sound, and the intellect will take care of itself.

If once we grasp this great principle of scholastic philosophy, that man's purely spiritual intellect depends on the organs solely because the organs have to furnish the spiritual intellect with its "congenial objects", there will be very few practical difficulties left, to prevent our admitting that there is a great spirit in us, even when we feel most unfit for thought.

## CHAPTER VII.

### The Mystery of the Soul's Unconsciousness.

There is one objection, against the theory of an immortal soul being part of the human personality,

which deserves special attention. Both the objection and the answer to it do occur in various chapters in this book, under various forms; yet as the matter is of unusual importance, I thought it necessary to write a separate chapter on it.

I call the difficulty in question the mystery of the soul's unconsciousness.

The objection may be formulated in the following way.

How is it possible for a spirit to be united with a bodily organism, and yet to be so entirely unconscious of its own existence, when we see the bodily organism having such a direct consciousness of its own acts and its own existence? For it is the verdict not only of observation, but also of rational philosophy, and of Scholastic philosophy in particular, that there does not exist for man, here on earth, a direct consciousness of the acts and of the existence of the soul. The soul's acts are found out through a careful process of mental sifting that reveals the presence, in man, of activities which are something higher than the highest sensitive activities; the distinction between pure soul-acts and highest sense-acts is not obvious; I do not distinguish as easily and as directly between

a purely intellectual act, and a purely sensitive act, as I distinguish between a feeling of bodily pain and a feeling of bodily gratification. The soul's existence is a fact even more remote; I know it only through a most elaborate process of reasoning.

But even granted that there are in man certain higher activities, which careful mental analysis will pronounce to be something totally distinct from the activities of sensitive life, there is another circumstance which adds weight to the objection.

Acts of that class may be the manifestation of a spirit; they may tell us that in man there is a soul which is superior to the bodily organism. But how much is there of man's life, that is spent without a single vestige of such higher activities!

The human individual has to spend, in every case, several years without any such higher activities; the age of reason begins then only when an appreciable portion of human life is already gone.

Sleep is for all practical purposes devoid of those higher activities.

There are human beings who never show any signs of the higher activities, in the course of their whole life, however prolonged that life may be;

the perpetually insane never show signs of rational life in the real sense of the word.

It would be an easy task to multiply instances of those delays, intermittences, suspensions or even total extinctions of the higher activities, in man, at the time when a spiritual soul is supposed to be united with the body.

It may be said that the primitive man, the savage, has very few, if any, of the higher soul-activities, even when he does not belong to the class of the mentally deranged.

In fact, man's mental evolution does not seem to differ in its laws from the organic evolution in nature. It is a comparatively easy task to point out and enumerate every one of the causes that bring about every forward step on the road of mental progress, both for the race and the individual.

No Catholic theologian, with all his faith in the presence of an immortal spirit in man, would ever look for the cause of mental progress elsewhere than to external circumstances, that can be classified scientifically. The soul is not the cause of progress, to the theological mind; if anything, the soul is the thing that is made to progress. Not the internal



soul, but the external world is the source of every forward movement of the human mind.

But all these considerations simply bring out more forcibly the difficulty: how is it possible for a mighty substance, entirely spiritual in its nature, to be apparently so inactive, to the extent of not even being a source of mental progress?

The difficulty vanishes if we reflect on the soul's mission in the body.

The soul is to the body an immanent principle of elevation; it raises the knowing and loving powers to a higher sensitive level, than is the animal level; moreover, it raises the results of that highest sensitive life to a purely immaterial level. We must refer the reader to our Chapter on Elevation. The soul is essentially a principle of elevation, not of progress. b. 24.

Now, it ought to be perceived easily, how a spiritual substance whose whole rôle it is to be the intrinsic, causative principle of elevation to a bodily organism, may be intensely causative, intensely real, without having a direct consciousness of its own existence; how it may be the greatest power, the most important partner, in the human combination, and yet be externally the least assertive thing.

Being essentially a principle of elevation, it acts to the full extent of its powers, if it elevates; it exhausts itself, so to speak, in elevating the human organism.

Now this elevation takes place in every possible human individual, however low he may be in the scale of mental culture; for potentially every human being is fit both for art and thought.

For the same reasons, the absence of the higher mental activities is reconcilable with the presence of a mighty spirit, in man.

The spirit or soul does not cause new light, new thoughts, new views; it only elevates the results of the sensitive knowledge. The soul is not the direct cause of progress; the material world, apprehended by the senses, is the direct cause of all progress; the soul's mission is to elevate the acquisitions of the knowing powers that are in the senses, to the immaterial plane, and to extend them by means of logical deductions. The soul does not make new things; the soul makes higher and broader the things already existing in the sense-apprehensions.

Let the bodily organism have its normal state, let it possess its full development, so as to have highest sensitive activities, the soul will raise the

results of those activities to the immaterial plane at once, without any effort.

The soul is there; but the body may be imperfect, may have its higher sensitive life disturbed or retarded in some way; there is no proper, congenial matter for the soul to elevate.

The soul is neither conscious nor unconscious by itself; it is neither active nor inactive by itself; it is simply a principle of elevation to the bodily organism and to the activities of the bodily organism. It has no consciousness peculiar to itself distinct from that of the whole human compound.

The consciousness, the activity, is of the body, elevated by the soul. Our next chapter will throw more light on this most interesting subject.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### The Awakening of the Soul.

When our masters require a definitely human organism before the soul is united with the human body, they are under no illusion. It is not in order to safeguard the soul's dignity that they require a comparatively perfect organism.

The simple-minded might be ready with the following objection: "If the soul is the perfectly spiritual

substance it is said to be, as soon as it comes to the body, it ought to shew its presence by decidedly spiritual acts; now no such acts are possible with a crude organism." It is not to meet an objection of that nature that our masters exact a perfect organism for the union of soul and body; for if the objection were pushed to its full logical length, the adult man only could be credited with a soul.

No men ever had a higher idea of the soul's excellency than our masters; yet they all hold it as an article of Christian faith that the soul is united and united completely and perfectly with the embryonic body, long before there is distinct conscious life. A newborn infant has an immortal soul, and baptismal grace comes to it as truly as to the adult catechumen. Therefore it is apparent that the reasons which made our masters postulate a specifically human organism before the soul is infused, are not so much to be found in the soul's intellectual life as in the soul's vivifying and elevating power; a soul is united with a body to the full extent of the union as soon as the body is capable of being vivified and animated with a higher life.

Are we then to suppose that the soul is dormant for a long period of its existence in the body; that



it is inactive, nay latent in the human organism? and if so, how are we to view the awakening of the soul, its transition from unconsciousness into the state of highest consciousness and responsibility?

First of all, not one of our masters ever held that the human soul in this life has a direct consciousness of its own existence and nature. In other words, my soul has never seen itself, has never felt itself; it is the condition of the disembodied soul to see and feel itself, to be conscious of its own nature and existence, directly, not through laborious reasonings. It would be nothing short of a miracle if such a consciousness of the soul's nature and existence did take place in us, whilst we live in our body, even for one short moment. It is through a most subtle and most attentive observation of our mental life that we arrive at the conclusion that there is a soul in us, and the road to that conclusion lies high and is very toilsome. But a direct intuition in the soul of its own self not only is not given to the mortal state, but such an intuition essentially constitutes the disembodied state of the soul.

Therefore when we speak of the awakening of the soul, we must not expect too much; we must

not expect it to arrive at a directly spirit-like consciousness of its own self; such an awakening is the awakening of eternity, not of time.

In order to understand more clearly the kind of awakening there is in the human soul, we must again bear in mind the far reaching principles enunciated in some of the preceding chapters: that the soul is to the body a principle of higher life. To be such a principle is, so to speak, the whole *raison d'être* of the soul. The soul is essentially a spiritual leaven to the body, to leaven the mass of the human bodily organism. The moment the soul begins that leavening, it is fully active; it fulfils its mission completely. Even in the embryonic human individual the soul is indefatigably at work, as the principle of a growth that soon will result in the mature human brain, with its super-sensitive powers and operations. The soul has not to awake; it is the bodily organism that has to awake; the soul's mission is to bring about that higher awakening of the brain which makes man superior to the animal. For as we have said elsewhere, man is superior to the animal through his higher sensitive life, through his higher sensitive consciousness, and not alone through his intellectual life. Such is the awakening of the

soul; it makes, in course of time, the human organism to wake up to a life and to a consciousness that does not belong to the animal, but is exclusively human. But as for itself, the soul always remains a hidden principle, as long as it is united with the body.

The reader will remember the three regions in man's life spoken of in chapter V. What we said just now is the awakening in the second region, the region of the highest sensitive life.

What then about those soul-acts that are the third region? Are they not the soul's own workings, and therefore the direct consciousness the soul has of its own self?

We say elsewhere that pure intellectual life, with its concomitant volitive life, is a direct proof of the soul's spirituality. It would seem therefore that it is also a direct revelation of the soul's existence, a direct consciousness of its own self.

Such however is not the case. My bodily activities bring home to me directly a consciousness of my body's reality. I could never doubt the existence of my body; I feel, so to speak, its existence through and through; I do not want long and subtle argumentations to arrive at the conclusion that I have

a body. No such direct consciousness of the soul's existence is to be had, even when I am most busy intellectually. The intellectual operations are indeed the acts of the soul, but they are not acts that convey a consciousness of the soul's existence as an entity other than the living body; acts of that kind are reserved to the disembodied state.

To put it technically, in intellectual life the soul beholds or grasps intellectual objects, but it does not elicit what I might call spirit-deeds, deeds that reveal the spirit as clearly as sensation reveals the body.

There is an analogy for this, even in our bodily faculties. I know that I have eyes because I have beheld my countenance so often in a looking glass, because I have seen eyes in every one of my fellow-men; but for that I could not know that I have eyes, though my eyes are beholding constantly Nature and its marvels. Eyes are all for the external visible objects of Nature; if I had not a looking glass, or if I had no fellow-men, I could still find out by reasoning that I must have organs of vision; for I perceive external objects; therefore there must be in me an organ of vision. But the eyes themselves, when they are in a normal condition, never



reveal their existence directly through their activity. I do, so to speak, not feel my seeing, or better still, the eye does not see itself, though it sees everything else.

This is a mere analogy, as I have said. In the third region, the soul understands intellectual things or objects, but it does not understand itself; it must arrive at the conclusion of its own existence, through elaborate reasoning.

In intellectual operations, we find the highest awakening of the soul in mortal life; but even there the awakening is dependent on the perfection of the bodily organism. The objects beheld by the soul are intellectual indeed, but intellectual though they are, they are about bodily things. It is the "intellectualness" of material things that is the highest food of the human soul in its state of union with the body; highest thoughts are intrinsically associated with material objects. Our minds cannot act intellectually without our imagination having at the same time a material, and so to speak, palpable image of the thing.

I spoke of that psychological law in the preceding chapter, where established that through the very conditions of our nature highest intellectual

life is simply impossible without a vast amount of organic life that precedes, accompanies, and follows it. We should be intellectually in a state of dormancy, if it were not for the awakening of our senses. Therefore—and this is the fact I want to insist upon just now—even in this third region, the awakening of the soul is merely the consequence of the awakening of the body. The soul is fully awake then only, when the body has reached such maturity as to be able to furnish all that higher sensitive life which has to precede, accompany, and follow highest intellectual life. Given that maturity, the soul does its intellectual work infallibly, and, as it were, of necessity.

By awakening of the soul we mean something different from the perfection of the soul. Perfection of the soul implies not only activity, but also rectitude. A soul may have highest activity and yet lack rectitude; rectitude is a different thing altogether. Of the rectitude, or the perfection of the soul, we shall speak in our next chapter.

Many times in ordinary parlance awakening of the soul is mentioned in reference to man's moral or spiritual life, in reference to man's realisation by faith of his having a soul. We speak of a

soulless man, not because a man is entirely destitute of intellectual life, but because he is destitute of a practical conviction that he has a soul, or that his fellow-men have a soul; intellectually he may be wide awake; yet we would call him soulless, on account of the absence of certain moral qualities. But all this comes more appropriately under the heading of the soul's rectitude or perfection.

## CHAPTER IX.

### The Soul's Perfection or Rectitude.

The soul is a spirit. Without exaggeration, one may say that spirits, and spirits only, are perfect or imperfect, in the true sense of the expression. Material things are always perfect; from the very laws of their materiality, they always fulfil their aim or mission. Those beings only can truly be called imperfect that have free will. Far from making perfection the same as spirit-nature, a spirit, and a spirit only, is either perfect or imperfect, simply because he has free will. The good use of his free will makes him perfect; misuse of free will makes him imperfect.

The reader sees therefore, at a glance, that the awakening of the soul, and the moral perfection of

the soul, are two very different things, following different laws; the one follows the law of intellectuality, the other follows the laws of free will.

That there is such a perfectibility for the human soul, is an essential doctrine in Christianity; it is, so to speak, the root of Christian ethics. Perfection of the soul is the salvation of the soul; it is the life of the soul; it is the eternal life of the soul; imperfection of the soul or more truly absence of perfection is the loss of the soul, it is eternal death. Without this perfectibility of the human soul, Christianity is incomprehensible, for Christianity is all psychological. Christianity is the making of the human soul; it views things and appreciates things only from the amount of perfection they give to the soul. For of what use is it to man to gain the whole universe if he lose his soul?

I have said just now that awakening of the soul and perfection of the soul follow different laws. This does not mean that the two things have nothing in common, do not help each other. It is precisely on account of that initial dormancy of the human spirit that perfectibility is both possible and necessary. A spirit fully awake to the extent of its being conscious directly of its own existence



and state, has no substantial perfectibility. The perfectibility of our soul in the moral order comes exclusively from its progressive awakening in the intellectual order; it comes from the soul's union with a constantly changing bodily organism. In the state of separation between soul and body there is no longer a real perfectibility for the human soul (Chapter 30).

It does great credit to Scholastic philosophy that it looks for the cause of the soul's perfectibility in the changeableness, in the growth of the bodily organism to which the soul is united. It shows how wise and moderate our masters are in their theories of the spirituality of the human soul.

A less wise philosophy would have made the soul's progress quite independent of the body, as the first condition of perfectibility. Nay, more. Perfection of the bodily organism according to the schoolmen, makes the soul, as such, more perfect. To give one instance only: Temperance and purity are essentially perfections of the bodily organism; we call them the virtues of the body. Now St. Thomas is explicit in stating that through the bodily perfections contained in those virtues, the soul itself is made more perfect. This is why real

sanctity of the soul could never be separated from the purity of the body. But of this more in another chapter (Chapter 20).

All the same, there is one very striking thing, in this matter of the perfectibility of the human soul. It is this: moral perfection may go much further than intellectual awakening in the soul. In other words, the soul's moral rectitude can be much greater than the soul's intellectual endowments. There is in the soul's moral perfection a finality that is not found in the soul's knowledge, here on earth. For reasons to be given later on, the case is different in the next world. If knowledge is of importance here on earth, it is of importance chiefly as an element of action, and because it leads to action, because it helps action.

To such an extent is this true, that perfection of the soul is possible without knowledge, in one instance at least. It requires no doubt, an extra influence from God, called grace: such is the state of the baptised infant.

I am of opinion that no philosopher has said the last word on the causes of the soul's perfectibility, whilst it is united with the body; and on the causes of the cessation of that perfectibility,

when the separation between soul and body has taken place.

As already remarked, this doctrine of perfectibility is a part of Christian dogma; and it is besides a part of Christian dogma, that the soul is made perfect, more through acts of the will, than through acts of the intellect.

It ought to be understood clearly that the perfection of the soul coming from the right exercise of its free will is a permanent state of the soul; it makes the soul fundamentally better, just as abuse of will-power makes the soul fundamentally bad or imperfect. Repeated virtuous acts give the soul a psychological rectitude which endures for ever, unless by opposite acts this rectitude be again destroyed. All our philosophy on vices and virtues is merely the philosophy of the making and marring of the human soul. Virtue builds up the soul, vice pulls it down. The highest things in the Christian dispensation, such as the Eucharist, are all a building-up of the soul; they are destined to make the soul more perfect. Catholicity knows of no redemption that is not a transformation of the human soul. Progress is the law of Catholic spirituality; it means first the repetition of virtuous acts, and then the

doing of higher acts, which will result for the soul in a more perfect state, that will endure for ever.

This law of perfectibility is not an arbitrary law, laid down by God; it is a necessary law which is part of the soul's essence. It would imply contradiction for the soul to be precious in the eyes of God without being intrinsically perfect. It is of course within God's power to bring about that intrinsic perfection in a miraculous way, as for instance in the case of the infant that receives baptism. But the normal way for the soul of perfecting itself is the repetition of free virtuous acts and the effort at higher acts. There is no reason why we should deny God the power of rendering the soul intrinsically more perfect without repeated acts; but we must consider it to be a contradiction that the soul should be great and yet not have its greatness in itself.

In a later chapter more will be said about the body's part, in bringing about the soul's perfection, as the soul is made beautiful through the modesty of the body; but enough has been said I think, to make it clear, how the perfection of the soul is an aim worthy of man's effort.



People who are intellectually inferior are found to be, many times, vastly superior in the qualities of their will.

This disproportion between intellect and will some times surprises us; yet it is strictly in keeping with man's present conditions. It makes sanctity practically independent of the laws of scientific progress.

The reason given by St. Thomas why moral perfections in this life may go beyond the intellectual endowments is to be found in the region of the supernatural. By charity the Holy Ghost works on the human will directly, personally. There is no such direct or personal working on the human mind in this life. Left to his natural powers, it does not seem that man's perfection of will could ever go beyond the perfection of his mind.

## CHAPTER X.

### The Soul's Place in the Universe.

The human soul holds a definite position in the created Universe; it is an indispensable link in the chain of beings that constitute the Universe. It fulfils a definite mission, which no other created being could fulfil. It has a rôle to carry out, and

its rôle is not transferable. It is a note in the harmony of the world of beings; without it, there would be a dissonance.

By Universe, we mean the entire aggregate of created things, both material and spiritual. For Catholic theology considers that the spirit-part of the Universe is the most important section of it, and it considers, too, that the gradation from the lowest particle of matter up to the highest spirit is an uninterrupted ascension from perfection to perfection. There is no leap in the Universe, no gap, no violent transition. The Universe has never been considered otherwise by Catholic theology than as a perfect Whole, in which the higher being invariably possesses all the perfection of the being that precedes it. The Universe, to the theological mind, has all the continuance of growth; even there, where growth is no longer possible, the theologian looks for uninterrupted continuance in the scale of beings. No men are greater believers in what might be called the interlocking of beings, than the old theologians.

Sound theology invariably starts with the question of a being's position and rank in the Universe. Sound theology never begins with the exceptional,

the privileged state; it leaves the exceptions to the very end. What is a being's office and mission, in the Universe? What is its share in the universal harmony of things? This is the starting point for all good theology.

It is therefore of paramount importance for us to grasp the doctrine of our masters concerning the soul's place in the Universe.

The question to ask ourselves is not exactly into what God could make the human soul; but what is required of the soul to help in making the Universe one harmonious Whole.

This, then, according to the constant teaching of St. Thomas, is the soul's rôle and mission in the Universe: the soul is the one being, that has at the same time spiritual and experimental knowledge and love of the physical Universe.

The human soul must be considered as the spirit that knows and loves the material, the physical Universe experimentally. Experimental knowledge stands here for knowledge received from the material, the visible and tangible objects, through the impressions made by those objects on the subject. Those impressions we suppose to be true impressions, in the sense that they convey to the

knowing-powers the exact state of things, as it is in material nature. How it is possible for the human soul, which we suppose to be a pure spirit, to receive true and faithful impressions from material objects, we saw in Chapter 2, where it is shown how the physical world reaches the spirit through the senses, and does so, without destroying its spirituality.

A pure spirit, an angel, knows and loves the physical Universe; but he cannot do so experimentally, for he has not seen its beauties, heard its harmonies, touched its matter, tasted its properties. The pure spirit's knowledge, according to St. Thomas, is not the result of sensation and observation; it is directly infused by God; he is either created with such knowledge, or receives it from above in the course of his existence.

The human soul is created merely with the capacity for "taking in" the physical Universe. The human soul is entirely and exclusively the spirit of the physical Universe, in the sense of its being a spirit that has no other knowledge than the one given by the physical Universe.

An animal has some experience of the physical Universe, through sensation; but it could not be called understanding; it has merely sensations, or



compounds of sensations. The human soul has knowledge, which on the one hand has the spiritualness of an angel, and on the other hand has the experimental character of animal-sensations; but we must remember at the same time that it is neither sensation, nor angelic knowledge. Once more, it is at the same time experimental and spiritual. And what is said here of knowledge, must be understood of love too.

This view of the soul's cosmic position does not tie down the soul to the physical Universe; nothing we have said warrants such a conclusion. The physical Universe everywhere shows the Creator's hand. The knowledge and love of the physical Universe, which we say to be the soul's exclusive rôle, implies knowledge and love of God, as far as the physical Universe reveals Him. "For the invisible things of Him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, His eternal power also, and Divinity" (Rom. i. 20).

When we say that the soul's place in the Universe is to know and love as a spirit, and yet experimentally, the things of the physical world, we are far from asserting that the soul's natural end

and aim is the physical world. It is God, and God alone, manifested to the soul in the beauties of the physical Universe.

It is true that the human soul has never been left to this primitive, natural rôle; from the very beginning God meant it to have a privileged state; from the very beginning the soul was intended for higher knowledge and love, than the knowledge and love of the physical world. It must be borne in mind, however, that the natural state is not taken away by the privileged state; it remains in its entirety, only it is no longer the last and final thing; there is now something loftier to aspire to. But over and over again, we shall be obliged to bear in mind the soul's natural, primitive destiny, if we are to understand the soul's powers and workings.

The soul's place in the Universe may be made clearer still, if we look at the matter from another point of view, from the physical Universe itself. It may be said that in the human soul, and in the human soul alone, there is a spiritual consciousness of the material and the visible beauty and goodness of Nature.

Without the human soul, the physical Universe must for ever be barren, and fruitless, for the

spirit-world; it could never profit it, in any way. It is in the very nature of the pure spirits, whom we call angels for lack of a better term, to possess all knowledge *a priori*, as it were, having received it directly from God, being created with the fulness of science. They do not learn from the physical Universe, they do not see anything in it which they are not already in possession of in their intellects. It would be truer to say that the physical Universe receives from them, than to say that they learn from it.

Physical nature would therefore lack finality, would not be connected with the higher, the spirit-part of the Universe, if it were not for the human soul, to which it is the storehouse of all knowledge, the source of all love, the beginning of all greatness.

Enough has been said, I think, to make it clear that the soul's first food must be amongst the things that are seen with the eyes and heard with the ears, — that Nature with its charm is as a mother to the human soul; and that the soul is truly the sanctuary where the world's marvels are able to praise the Lord.

## CHAPTER XI.

**The Origin of the Human Soul.**

The point that is of paramount importance in the theology of the human soul, is its spirituality, the fact of its being a strictly spiritual substance, with operations superior to the possibilities of organic matter. The spirituality of the human soul could never be for a Christian the subject of a doubt. Christianity stands and falls with the doctrine of the spirituality of the human soul. The spirituality of the human soul once established, the doctrine of the Hereafter is a direct consequence.

The spirituality of the human soul, being after all the one thing that matters, it is not surprising that the origin of the human soul is a doctrine which has not been as clear to the minds of Christian thinkers, as has been the doctrine of the soul's spirituality. Provided spirituality be safeguarded, it matters little, how the soul comes into existence.

The history of this part of Catholic theology is interesting from the point of view just stated. Great names are identified with views about the origin of the human soul, which views later philosophy



has repudiated. St. Augustine, for instance, is a believer in the transmission of the human soul, from parent to child. There were doctors who thought that human souls were created in Adam, and transmitted in a state of latent existence, to his various offsprings, the laws of generation being, as it were, the distributors of the souls.

We need not be surprised at these vacillations of the Christian mind about the origin of the human soul. Once granted its spirituality, the mode of origin is quite a secondary consideration.

The Church has now adopted, as a Catholic doctrine, the view that every human soul is created directly by God; but nothing would be less in keeping with the history of human thought than to imagine that this divine origin of the human soul was the starting point for the Christian mind, always prone to make God the direct origin of everything. The starting point for the Christian mind is the spirituality of the human soul; and the doctrine of individual creation by God was arrived at simply because every other theory concerning the origin of the human soul has been found wanting.

It is of great importance to bear in mind this secondary position of the doctrine of the divine

origin of the human soul. Catholic theology could never be accused of appealing to the intervention of God, when there was no reason for the appeal. It appealed because it was driven to it by the laws of logic. Catholic theology, in this matter of the origin of the human soul, far from ignoring the powers of Nature, that begets like from like, clings to those laws longer than any other philosophy.

This will be seen more clearly, if we look for one moment at the argument which drives the theologian into admitting a divine origin for the human soul. In a nutshell the argument is this:

The human soul is an entirely spiritual substance; its activities are far beyond the possibilities of organic matter; organic matter therefore could not be its origin; for an inferior thing cannot be the origin of a vastly superior thing; only a spiritual substance could be the origin of another spiritual substance. As a last resource, one might think of the soul of the parent as the origin of the soul of the child; but this could only be conceivable if the parent soul were parted, so to speak, in two, a theory evidently incompatible with the simplicity of a spiritual substance. There being no power either in the body or the soul of the

parent to produce a spiritual soul in the offspring, an outside power must be had recourse to; and this outside power must be one of infinite energy, as it is supposed to bring about the existence of a spiritual being from no preexisting materials.

As I do not profess to write a strictly philosophical treatise, I do not feel bound to give the lengthy and profound reasoning of St. Thomas Aquinas, through which he arrives at the conclusion that God creates every soul. What I want the reader to be impressed with is this: that, if it had been possible to make Nature responsible for the existence of every soul, Catholic theologians would have been the last men to doubt Nature's resources. One might say that they arrived at the conclusion stated above, almost reluctantly.

Nature, in fact, is credited by the Scholastic philosophers with greater powers, than by any biologist. Their principle is this, that Nature in the production of the human individual carries the human organism to such a pitch of perfection as to postulate the active creation of the soul on the part of God, the work of Nature being called *passive creation*. This proposition formulated by Cajetan is worth a moment's meditation.

Not only does Nature, in the production of man, keep all and everyone of the laws of heredity, admitted by biologists, but in man, owing to the superior nature, heredity itself is perfected. Nature produces an organism of such exceeding perfection, that it would be a failure, unless a spiritual substance were united with it, to which it may minister, so as to have a full scope for its high qualities.

The creation of the soul, on the part of God, is not a superseding of Nature's activities, it is a completing of Nature's activities. It steps in there, where Nature fails, and Nature in the production of man, according to our masters, is more marvellous, than in the production of any other living being. It shapes an organism which is the appropriate setting for an immortal spirit. Nature shapes the ring of gold; God puts in the brilliant diamond, the soul, in the spot provided by Nature.

From this we see how entirely preposterous it would be to consider the creation of the soul as a superfluous theory, as heredity is supposed to be resourceful enough to explain everything. Heredity will never explain highest intellectual life and free will.

We suppose here a clear understanding of creation, in the mind of the reader. Creation is not a com-



munication of God's own Personality or Being; creation is the free act of God, through which He makes the thing to exist, without working on pre-existing elements. The human soul is divine, in the sense of its being the direct result of God's power. More truly, however, the human soul is divine, because, as spirit, it bears a resemblance to God. Its spirit-nature, once more, is to it the source of all greatness.

Before ending, I will deal with a few popular difficulties on the subject.

It would seem, as if there were a kind of restriction of God's liberty, if God is bound to bring to completion, in the production of man, a work which Nature has begun. But all this is strictly in accordance with the universal laws of Providence. God in this case simply carries out His own designs; therefore His acts being the sequel of a universal design, are perfectly free acts; God simply does what He willed to do from the very beginning.

This solution is applicable to another difficulty. Would it not seem as if God worked hand in hand with the sinner, when man is conceived through sin? "When Nature works at the bidding of sinful

instincts, God", says St. Thomas, "concurrer not with sin, but with Nature." There is no more reason to be scandalised at this intervention of God's power in man's sin, than at His making the sun rise over the godly and the ungodly. The laws of the Universe are of greater importance than man's transitory abuse of free will.

Some simple minds might find it difficult to reconcile this constant exercise of God's creative power with their ideas about God's repose. "My Father worketh up to now, and I work", said Incarnate Wisdom. God's repose is His activity, and His activity is His repose. Besides, the act of God is one unchanging act, without yesterday, or to-day, or to-morrow in it. Succession is found in the things He creates, not in Himself. For God not only causes things to be, but He causes them to be in such and such a time, to follow upon other events and to prepare the way for coming beings.

There have been various views amongst our masters as to the moment when the immortal soul is given to the body, through the act of God. The controversy is of little importance; the main point is this: the soul comes then only, when the

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organism has reached such a state as to postulate the presence of a higher soul. The moment when this state is reached, is a point which most likely will never be decided.

## CHAPTER XII.

### Creation of the Soul and Heredity.

Long before the days of biology, mankind had observed the great phenomenon of natural heredity; the most uneducated will tell you that such and such a quality or defect in your character was your father's or your grandfather's characteristic. The uneducated almost instinctively seek for the explanation of your oddities in your father or grandfather, whom they have known. Popular belief in heredity is of a very comprehensive nature; it gives rather more than less. Moral qualities, as well as moral imperfections are transmitted from the parent to the child, according to the popular belief.

How then are we to reconcile hereditary acquirements with the advent of the soul from the outside, through creation? Science, as we all know, has followed up the insight of the unsophisticated mind, into Nature's powers, in this matter of heredity. Theology, if anything, would credit Nature with

more power for transmitting parental qualities, than science itself. In fact, theology is ready for any marvel of heredity which observation will ever bring to light. To quote one instance only: the fallen state of man, if not original sin itself, is entirely an instance of heredity. How then is it that the advent of an immortal soul to the body from the outside, so to speak, does not become to the human individual the beginning of an entirely new history, an entirely new life?

Would it not seem that the moment the embryonic man is given a spiritual soul, it would mean a complete severance from the past, from the exigencies of heredity? Are we not to expect that the immortal soul will be to man not only a principle of higher life, but also a principle of an entirely new life? Are we not to expect that this particular human individual is not what his parents make him, but what the immortal spirit that comes from God makes him?

Our philosophy teaches that there is in man only one soul, the spirit created by God; this one soul is responsible for every kind of activity in man; it is not as if there were a division of souls, everyone of them being the principle of a given form of life,



with the spiritual soul on the top of them all. The one spiritual soul is the principle and source of every form of life in man.

But this view about the oneness of soul in man seems to be an additional difficulty. For if the one immortal soul in man quickens everything in him, how is there any room left for parental qualities, for individualities, which come from the *milieu* from which we spring? Would it not seem that the spiritual soul coming from God should make us all alike, through its overwhelming simplicity? Catholic philosophy, as I have already said, is a staunch believer in the powers of heredity. If it had to choose between making the body like unto the soul, or making the soul like unto the body, it would give its preference to the second; that is to say, it would sooner make the qualities of the body a rule for the soul, than make of the soul a rule for the body. St. Thomas Aquinas inclines distinctly towards the view that Almighty God shapes the soul He creates according to the body into which He infuses it. As long as the soul's spirituality is safeguarded, there is no reason why the body, with its qualities, should not be to God the occasion for creating a soul with divers qualities.

This would be merely another application of the principle stated above, that God in the creation of the soul follows the predispositions of Nature.

However it is not there, that our philosophy looks for the solution of the problem. We do not explain the fact of our being so much the sons of our fathers, by saying that God gave us a soul very much in keeping with the qualities and defects left in us by our forebears. If we said it, as already remarked, we should not go against the genius of our philosophy. Provided we cling to the spirituality of our soul, we need not fear. There seems to be no contradiction in supposing that spiritual souls may differ widely in qualities, God shaping them according to the differences of hereditary dispositions.

Heredity remains entire under the quickening action of the immortal soul that comes from God, precisely because the soul comes to an already constituted organism. The soul does not change that organism, but raises it to a higher life. The soul works on elements already strongly individualised and qualified; in fact, it is against all principles of Scholastic theology to think of an advent of the soul to a matter that is in a state of crudity and death. The immortal soul can be soul and principle of life only

to an organic living body; indeed it must find it a living body when it comes; it makes that organic living body do higher things; but the body cannot get away from its inherent qualities, as the musician, however perfect in his art, cannot make himself independent of the qualities of his instrument.

It is higher life the soul gives, not new life. This higher life must be carried on with the old dispositions, the old qualities. The advent of the immortal soul makes the organism fit for highest love and highest thought; but love and thought in that human individual will be shaped by many predispositions of brain and heart. The soul is indeed the artist; it is even more than the artist; it gives to its instrument the final touch of perfection. However, as the soul is not a creator, but merely a vivifier, it does not make a new instrument, but finishes off a thing half completed by Nature.

Nature's work has its qualities and its defects, which the soul cannot change. The soul may add to it a few more strings, but it has to play likewise on those left by Nature. Or better still, there is not even a new string added to the instrument by the soul; the soul's office is merely to tune all the

strings of Nature to the highest pitch; but all the tuning in the world will never change the make of the instrument.

Here I must remind the reader of a thing I have said elsewhere, that there are certain intellectual and volitive operations which could never come under the scope of heredity. In those perfections, all men are equal. Thus all men, whatever their ancestors may have been, see equally clearly the truth of the mathematical statement that two and two are four; all men alike are practically convinced that moral evil is not preferable to moral good. These things come from the spirituality of our soul which, as I have said, is always safeguarded under all possible modifications that come from heredity.

It is there, too, that we shall find an answer to a difficulty of which we hear frequently, how man is free in many of his acts, in spite of the predispositions of heredity. Free acts belong to what we call the third region in man, which is quite independent of heredity. It has a certain control over the workings of hereditary dispositions, but the control is far from being complete (Chapter 24 and 25).



## CHAPTER XIII.

**The Doctrine of the Soul and the Theories  
of the Descent of Man.**

Much has been written about the descent of man. Many a believing Christian has felt keen heartpangs when he approached for the first time certain clever books and essays, written by the pioneers of evolution, as he felt that the book or essay might very well contain such arguments as to destroy his long cherished belief in the divine origin of Man.

These fears in Christian breasts are quite unfounded. For the Christian there cannot be any question about the "Descent of man", in the sense of the modern controversy. Evolution has no more to do with man's origin, in the Christian sense, than with transubstantiation.

There is only one controversy possible, the controversy about the indwelling of an immortal soul in man. No other question is really of any interest to the believer.

If we are convinced that there is in us an immortal soul, the descent of man becomes essentially an unevolutionistic question.

If, on the contrary, there be no immortal soul in man, how could we possibly find fault with the evolutionistic theory of man's origin. In that case, the evolutionist is the wisest and most spiritual of men.

From the very nature of the subject, evolution can neither prove, nor disprove the theory of the indwelling of an immortal soul in man, because the soul begins where evolution ends. Evolution must essentially be in the sensitive powers of man, in his organs; the soul is above the organs. Evolution cannot be concerned with anything but organs; a spirit is clearly above evolution.

Some people seem to think that theories of evolution could possibly demonstrate that there is no immortal soul in man. This no evolution-theory is able to do, as evolution is concerned with that part of the history of the human race which is prehistoric, and which therefore does not exhibit any trace of any sort of thought.

Then only can we reasonably begin to hold controversies about the existence or non-existence of the human soul, when thought begins in man. As soon as there is any record of thought, we are in historic times, even if they were called prehistoric

by an abuse of language. And by thought I mean here abstract thought, with ratiocination.

Such thought, and such thought alone, is an argument in favour of the soul's existence. All controversy, therefore, about the soul's existence, must be connected with man's historic life. Whatever is before, we may leave it safely to the evolutionist; for it is there that he is really at home.

Man has thought through his soul. He is, what he is now, through his immortal soul. This, and no other is the Christian standpoint.

For the Christian, therefore, the question of man's origin resolves itself into this: How did man become that compound of a spiritual soul with an organic body, which accounts for his life of thought, such as history reveals it?

There is no other standpoint for the believer. To be quite accurate, our only enemy is the materialist; the evolutionist, as such, as separated from the materialist, is the most harmless of men.

The evolutionist has not even given new arguments to the materialist, as evolution cannot in anyway account for human thought more than did the materialists in the days before Aristotle.

Where the Christian and the evolutionist might really be on common ground, is in the interpretation to give to the words of Genesis, that God made man, i. e. the body of man, of the slime of the earth.

But evidently, even with that expression, we know very little as to the way in which the formation of man's body took place, previously, if there was any real priority, to the advent of the immortal soul.

That man's body is from the slime of the earth, is true in every possible theory.

To sum up—If there is an immortal soul in man, there is no descent of man from imperfect beings, as the immortal soul cannot be descended. If, on the contrary, there is no immortal soul in man, then, by all means, let us have the Darwinian descent of man.

It is quite possible that there may have been beings resembling man much more closely than the modern ape. But without a spiritual soul, they were no more "man" than a frog.

There are people in England who are sincere Christians, or who think themselves to be sincere Christians, without believing in a soul, spiritual and



immortal in itself. They are religious oddities; they would be the only people who have to dread the new theories of the Descent of Man.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### The Mode of Union between Soul and Body.

Our eternal hopes are based on the fact that our soul may have an existence outside the body; when the bodily habitation shall have fallen to pieces, the soul goes on living, goes on with its existence.

With this idea of a separate existence for the soul before our eyes, we must now approach the difficult question of the mode of union between soul and body. It is perhaps one of the most subtle concepts in Catholic philosophy, but its subtlety is not such as to prevent the educated lay-mind from arriving at a comparatively clear understanding of this great mode of union.

I must remark at once, that Catholic theology always steered clear of all theories that make the union between an immortal soul and a bodily organism a kind of penal arrangement, the soul being tied down to a body, for the trespasses of a pre-

vious existence. Views of that kind have always possessed a considerable degree of fascination for a certain class of minds. There seems to be something romantic in the idea of the best part of ourselves being a prisoner for deeds done in a higher sphere of the Universe.

But even discarding all thought of a previous existence, union between soul and body, which would not be union for the soul's benefit, would be distinctly a most uncatholic view. Speaking generally, it has simply to be maintained that it is better for the soul to be with the body, than to be outside it. We shall try in Chapter 16, to answer all the objections, this assertion might raise.

Granted then the soul's independent existence, and granted too the allround profitableness of the union between soul and body, how are we to conceive that union? For on the face of it, it must be a union unlike anything else we know from direct observation.

For it is not merely a presence of the soul in the body we want, it is a real union between the two; mere presence, were it ever so beneficial to the body, could never make of soul and body the one being called man. They would always be two

distinct beings or personalities; such for instance would be, according to theologians, the presence of an angel, or even an evil spirit, in a bodily being. The two could never make one personality, however long the union may last. We may, of course, for the sake of expeditious thought, consider the soul as having taken up its abode somehow, and somewhere inside our bodily frame, and from there ruling and guiding the body; most men will have to be satisfied with that primitive view of the case. It is not a dangerous view as long as it is understood to be merely metaphorical.

Now the philosophical definition of the union between soul and body, which must be called the Catholic definition of it, as it has so deeply sunk in Catholic theology, is this: the soul is united with the body, because it is for the human body its Form. No phrase occurs more frequently in the philosophy of past ages, and if anything ought to surprise us, it is the complete absence from the English language of those terms; for it is evident that the scholastic phrase just quoted has no meaning in English; everything centres round the significance of the term "Form". In the philosophy of past ages Form or *Forma* has inexhaustible metaphysical value.

There is no trace of such a great past in the modern "Form".

It would be useless for us to proceed, unless we succeed in understanding what "Form" means in the old philosophy.

The old philosophy starts with this principle: in all things created, there is composition or duality, the Creator alone is absolutely simple, absolutely one; even the highest spirit is a compound of actuality and potentiality. But to confine our attention to the duality or composition that is found in every bodily being, there is the composition of Matter and Form. There is in every bodily being something that is the principle or source of the three dimensions, of inertia, of resistance; and something that is the source or principle of qualities and activities; the first is called Matter, the second is called Form. It will be seen that Matter, in the old philosophical language, is not quite the same thing with what we should call colloquially matter.

I must of course be satisfied with this brief sketch of what Matter and Form mean in the old philosophy. For the sake of illustration I take a higher instance. A plant is built up of elementary matter,



easily analysed by chemistry and expressed in clear formulas. The elements are common elements, found all over Nature; they enter into the constitution of many other beings, and many other plants, specifically and generically different, from the plant in question. How then is it, that in this case, those common elements are pressed into service, for building up such a being, so different, so individualistic in its nature? There must be at work, in the plant, another principle. Colloquially we should call it the nature of the plant; philosophically we should call it the "Form" of the plant. The plant is to be considered as a result, as a product, the product of the special Form, working upon, and utilising common material elements.

This then is Form; it might also be called soul. There is however this distinction. Even inorganic entities, for instance the chemical elements, are compounds of Matter and Form, according to our philosophers. Soul is indeed Form, but the Form only of living and sentient beings; in other words, a soul is the same thing as the Form of a living being.

I have not to defend the metaphysical exactness of the old Scholastic view of the duality in all

things; suffice it to say, that it is essentially a point of metaphysics, not a point of experimental science; this duality is not a chemical combination to be verified by a chemical analysis; it is a duality that makes the very existence of a being and therefore is prior to anything which experimental science could ever submit to its processes.

On the other hand, biology has nothing to fear from the theory of Forms; for with the exception of the human soul all Forms are said by our masters, and they say it with great emphasis, to be produced by the generative agents from the potentialities of existing Matter. Useless is it to say that the theory of Matter and Form reaches its noblest applications in the fully developed animal, and the highest amongst them man. For no Catholic theologian ever looked askance at the modern phrase that defines man as a highly developed animal. One could fill a book with quotations from St. Thomas, in which he defines man, a rational animal — *Animal rationale*. This, in fact, is scholastically the only correct definition of man.

All other definitions the scholastic rejects as mere verbiage.

Here, then, the matter under consideration is brought to a point: the thing that is Form to the human organism and makes the human animal the perfect sentient being it is, is the immortal soul created by God, a spirit as we have said, that is at the same time soul; in other words, a spirit that is able to fulfil the functions of Form, though it has higher functions than mere Form-functions; or better still, though its functions are not confined to mere Form-functions. The soul, then, is united with the body, as Forms are united with Matter, and in this, and this alone, consists the wonderful union. The human soul is Form, but it is a Form that rises above Matter, and in this superiority to Matter it differs from all other Forms.

No doubt endless questions could be asked here; how it all coincides with heredity on the one hand, and the advent of the soul from the outside on the other; for the human soul comes from God, not from the parents. But this is not the chapter for such questions. What I undertook to shew, I have I think shown satisfactorily—the mode of union.

## CHAPTER XV.

## The Soul's Existence.

It might surprise the reader to find that I have kept until now the answer to the most crucial of all questions, whether there is such a thing as a soul in man. But there is something to be said in favour of my arrangement. The greatest part of the arguments against the existence of the soul come from an ignorance of the soul's nature. The chapters that precede have given to the reader such views of the soul that I may hope confidently that his mind is now prepared for the positive proofs of the soul's existence.

What is called science, cannot in any way formulate a reasonable objection against the possibility of there being spirits, or more particularly of there being such a spirit as the human soul. The existence, or non-existence of entirely spiritual beings cannot in anyway belong to science, as science is all based on observable facts, and spirits, from the very fact of their being spirits, cannot come under man's observation.

The existence of spirits must belong therefore entirely to Faith; and nothing could be more idle



than to invoke the pronouncements of science either for or against the existence, or even the possibility of spirits.

But the question assumes quite a different aspect if we put it like this: "Is there such a spirit present in, and united with, the human body?"

This is an entirely different matter, and has nothing in common with the other question, whether there are spirits. There may be, or may not be, such things as birds with feathers of celestial blue; I cannot pronounce against the possibility of there being somewhere such specimens of the feathered world.

But there is one thing which I can judge of, with certainty; it is this, whether a bird of that kind is actually in my garden. Is there, actually at this moment, an immaterial spirit residing in my body? Put in that way, the question is a well founded; the doubt is a good-mannered doubt, and it does not go beyond its last.

All controversies, therefore, between materialists and believers must be brought back to this point. Are there evidences of the presence of an immaterial spirit, in man's body? Or are there clear proofs that there is no such spirit resident in man's body?

Our masters in sacred theology have a twofold basis on which to establish an argumentation that leads up to the admission of an entirely spiritual principle in man, a soul.

Their first basis is the wonderfully high sensitive life in man.

Their second basis is the existence in our minds of Universals, a term soon to be explained.

Sensitive life in man has a wonderfully wide range, and rises to an extraordinary altitude. Think of music, of conjugal love, manifestations that are not beyond sensitive life. They are the things of the body. Now, what our masters say is this: between man and the highest animal, the organic differences are not such as to account for those enormous differences in feeling and loving.

The organisms are nearly the same; but as for their manifestations, the excess on the side of man is so great, that one has to look for something that is not organism. And that something is the spiritual soul, "raising up" the common organism to higher activities. It is the "elevation" of the organism by the soul, of which St. Thomas speaks so often (Chapter 5).

Modern materialists, bent on not admitting the spiritual soul, have invented impossible theories to

account for the high sensitive life in man, as the organs of man are not such as to explain the gigantic advance in feeling and love, in man, over the animal.

Human organs act so perfectly, because they are "leavened" by a spiritual soul.

The second basis for establishing the presence of the spiritual soul within us are the Universals. I say, for instance "Where is gratitude?" This term gratitude is a Universal, because it represents a notion that is applicable universally. Gratitude is an idea, representative of a being, that is not confined to any time, to any place. Now, say our masters, a thinking thing, that can think in universals, and with universals, must be a spiritual, a non-material being. It must be a thing above the limitations of matter, otherwise it could not think with ideas that are applicable in every possible sphere. On Universals is based the power of abstract reasoning.

Just think of the endless applicability of this idea of gratitude! Think of its possibilities for ratiocination!

But it must be admitted that what seems to be evidence for the presence of such a spirit as a soul, is as nothing, with some people, when the evidences

against are brought forward. The materialist argues thus: Man's intellectual life entirely depends on the state of the brain. An unripe, or decadent, or infirm brain is unripe, decadent, and infirm intellectual life! Is it not tantamount to blasphemy to suppose a mighty being, such as an immaterial spirit must be, present in a child, in an old man struck with senile decay, in the mentally deranged, / a silent, idle spectator of the sad imbecilities of man!

A little dose of "anaesthetic" will be a total suspension of all that wonderful life. Science follows the workings of the beneficent gas, and explains clearly how it interrupts thought-and will-functions. How then it is possible to maintain the existence of a totally spiritual principle?

Surely, gas has no hold on a spirit. Therefore, though we cannot explain the higher feeling and higher thought in man, we may at least show with evidence that higher thought and higher love are the captives of merely chemical activities, which mean that higher thought and higher love cannot be spirit-manifestations.

Our answer is easy, from all that precedes. We say that we supposed all along precisely those very



things that are a stumbling block to the materialist. Those very considerations are part and parcel of the spirit-theory in man.

The first mission of the soul, her raising up of the senses, supposes senses in a normal state. The soul could never raise up to higher life senses in an abnormal state. It is the very opposite of the condition of being able to be raised.

A brain in an abnormal state is no more fit to be raised by the soul to higher life, than is a broken instrument of music to be made to sound harmoniously, even by the perfect musician.

There is one fact which ought to be borne in mind, and whose importance can hardly be overstated.

The delays, and cessations, and modifications in the intellectual life, in many cases traceable so directly to mere organic causes, far from speaking against the presence of a spiritual substance in man, are, on the contrary, the indispensable conditions of such a presence. I would not go so far as to say, that they are a clear evidence of that presence; this they are not, and cannot be; but what I say is this, that those phenomena not only are no proof against the presence, but are just what ought to happen if there be a spiritual soul in man.

If there be present in man an entirely spiritual substance, separable from the body, then it becomes absolutely necessary that things should be with our brain work, just as experience shows them to be. I might even say that the degree of separability is given by the measure of the soul's dependence on organic conditions for its operations.

And here is my reason for this statement. Most men look exclusively at the fact of spirituality; it is the one thing that frightens them, forces itself on them, through its apparent impossibility. Now this is to look in the wrong direction; this is to shy at the wrong object. There is no difficulty there, nothing we could reasonably take exception to, as just said.

Why should there be no such thing as spiritual substances? Or anyhow, why not leave their existence peacefully to the region of possibilities?

The paramount question then is not spirituality of a substance, it is the *presence* of such a substance in my body. How is it possible that a spiritual substance should be present in my body, should be united with it?

The whole controversy must be about the *presence*, not the spirituality as such. I cannot reconcile such a presence with those well-known sus-

pensions of intellectual life in man, you may say. My contention is this: Such a presence not only may be reconciled with those intermittences of intellectual life, but it actually supposes them; it tallies with them most comfortably.

What does it mean, when we say, that a spiritual soul is present in the body? Being a spirit, it is not inside the body as a chair is in a room. It must be necessarily an action of some kind of the soul on the body, and of the body on the soul, that is the link. This mutual influence is the only possible connexion to be thought of, when we speak of presence.

By every law, if the soul had one single action absolutely independent from the body, it would be no longer in the body. We may speak of the soul as rising above bodily action, we never speak of the soul's independence from bodily influence.

There is a difference which is considerable, between the presence of an angel, and the presence of the human soul. The angel may work upon an object, say the iron door of St. Peter's prison; he is there really, precisely because he works there, exerts an action there; but he could

*physical contact, contact of presence?*

never be said to be one person with this material object.

But the action of the soul is such as to make one person, which includes reaction on the part of the body. Any day therefore on which the human body could have even one of its human acts without the cooperation of the soul, they would be no longer together so as to form one person; and any day the soul could have one single act without the cooperation of the body, the union would have been severed.

Without in the least doubting the immaterial, intellectual character of our higher, or universal thought, our masters insist on our seeing how those very thoughts, the moment they exist, are primarily conditioned by sense-operations.

Intellectual work, even of the highest kind, is invariably brainwork, with all its fatigues and eclipses; not indeed in the sense that everything is brain-activity, but in the sense that the brain is busily engaged in supplying the non-organic, the non-brainbound mind with the elements for Universals,—for its unlimited, for its immaterial notions. For we must remember that the presentment of material objects to the immaterial mind is necessary



at every stage of the mental work. The mind never retains notions once received, but always gets them directly from the senses, whenever it works, though it may work in a way so excellent that the senses cannot approach it in point of perfection. The mind, therefore, is a blank at every period of its existence, unless it be illumined and fed by the senses.

This is the Scholastic view of human intellectual work, and it shews well how the immaterial intellect is a slave to organic conditions, being indebted to them for the elements of its knowledge.

It is therefore far from being paradoxical to say that the more the spirit depends on matter for the objects of its operations, the more evidence we have of its being superior to matter.

If soul and body are supposed to make one person, their union can last only as long as they work with each other in every act, and the more there is of that mutual work, the more there is of union. The superior part of man, the soul, is kept united to the inferior part, the body, only through that interdependence of activities.

In this chapter, I have tried to give the psychological evidences in favour of the presence of an immortal soul in man.

The Catholic standpoint is that man cannot be explained without the hypothesis of an entirely spiritual principle, united, in some very intimate way, with the bodily organism.

It is, in fact, a theological proposition, which cannot be controverted by a Catholic, that man, through his intellectual and volitive life, gives evidences of there being in him a principle of activities superior to the possibilities of organic matter.

It is not maintained, however, that every human individual has in himself such evidences of a higher principle, as to enable a philosopher to conclude that in this particular individual there is an immortal soul.

St. Thomas admits the difficulty of that mental analysis, by which the philosopher distinguishes ultimately the spiritual operations from the organic operations; the difficulty is owing to the wonderful and almost inexhaustible resourcefulness of organic life. If this is the case with the normally constituted human organism, how much more difficult will it be then, to find in the organically debased, or in the organically imperfect, evidences of a spiritual soul!

But in order to give a true definition of man, one need not stop at the imperfect specimens of the race. One ought to take the perfect specimens, as the normal representatives of the type; and if those perfect specimens have such activities, as to exact the hypothesis of a spiritual soul, we must admit the soul for the whole species, as a spiritual soul is quite compatible with a low state of individual evolution, according to what has been said in the chapter of *VII. p. 3* the "Mystery of the Soul's Unconsciousness".

My contention here is simply this, that there may be human beings, now alive, in whom there are no clear signs of activities of either of the two orders set forth in this chapter — I mean the higher sensitive life, and the purely intellectual life — owing to abnormal conditions. I maintain besides that with some people in whom there is higher sensitive life, the purely intellectual life may not be very evident.

This is not against the standpoint of Catholic theology. All we need hold, in order to be in conformity with theology, is the fact that mankind as a whole gives evidences of such activities as to postulate the hypothesis of a spiritual soul, united with the human organism.

Such is the wisdom of Catholic philosophy in this matter of the human soul, that the idea of evolution, in the sense of a progressive perfecting of a given being, far from being a thorn in the side of Catholic philosophy, is actually a necessary supposition, in order to explain how the human individual sooner or later gives evidence of there being in him an immortal soul.

I do not speak here of the moral proofs in favour of the existence of the human soul. The Tradition of mankind, revealed Faith, man's higher aspirations, etc., I call the moral proofs. They are in reality the most weighty arguments with most men. Those proofs stand on their own legs; all we need do here is to show how man's observable psychology does not reveal anything irreconcilable with the conclusions arrived at, through those moral proofs.

If my reasonings show anything, they ought to show clearly how it is much more difficult to explain man without the hypothesis of a spiritual principle, than to explain the presence of such a principle.



## CHAPTER XVI.

The Human Soul at its Separation  
from the Body.

There are few things in theology that are of greater personal interest to each one of us, than the conditions of existence for the human soul, the moment it departs from the body.

It is of course a hard task for our imagination to speak to itself the great tragedy of that parting between soul and body; it is only theological technicalities that can give rest and satisfaction to one's mind in this matter.

First, we must bear in mind that death would be badly defined if we defined it as a separation between soul and body. The soul need not be considered at all in the study of the phenomenon of death. The thing we have to consider, are the causes, physical and otherwise, that bring about the breaking up of the human organism. The materialist makes himself ridiculous, when he pretends to do away with the soul, because he is able to explain death without being obliged to have recourse to the departure of the soul.

There might be a thousand souls in a human body, and death would still occur, as it occurs

now, through laws that physical observation may follow, almost to their source.

The office of the soul has never been understood by our masters otherwise than as a power of elevation, making our organism do what it could not do, if it were left to mere animal vitality.

The destruction therefore of the organism, which it is as easy to explain as it is to effect, makes the soul lose its hold on the body. Being a spirit, its only tie to the body is its activity in the body, or at least its influence on the body. By influence I mean those results in the bodily organism which I have described in the chapters on Elevation, and on the Mode of union between soul and body.

This activity having been rendered impossible through the failing of the organism, the soul's presence in the body is at an end. Spirit-like, it passes into an entirely new state. We need not think of it, as being carried away by an angel, or a demon, into a distant world of spirits; we need not think of it, as flying there through its own activity, or even as being placed there by the hand of God. All these expressions are useful metaphors of course, but only metaphors. It simply passes from activity in the body into the spirit-state,

good or evil, happy or unhappy, according to its will-dispositions. It is in heaven, or it is in hell, or in some other state proper to a spirit, through its not being anymore an active power in the human organism.

We say of an angel, that for him to be on earth is to have a beneficent influence on a person or a place on this earth. When the influence ceases, he is no longer on the earth, through the very fact of that cessation of influence. If it were necessary for the human soul, once separated, to have active influence on a given part of the material Universe, or to be influenced by it passively, it would find itself there, through a kind of spirit-mobility, which is given to it as a congenial attribute, for its new state. But its transference into the spirit-world is effected, as I have said, through the cessation of its activity on the body.

One consideration that finds its place here, is this: Whatever knowledge the disembodied spirit may possess of the doings of this world, there is one impediment to knowledge, that does not exist for the separated soul, i. e. local distance.

Geographical distance, or nearness, has absolutely nothing to do with the matter of spirit-knowledge

and spirit-ignorance; and if spirits are to ignore what happens on earth, they do not ignore it because they are far from it, but for other reasons.

Catholic theology has assimilated what was best in all human philosophies, and has fought its battles, side by side with the cleverest minds not endowed with Catholic Faith. The Arabs of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, on the Spanish peninsula, had built up, on the old Greek philosophies, a magnificent system, partly intellectual, partly religious, which comes next in dignity to Scholastic theology.

They discussed all the questions which our own masters studied and solved. In this matter of the soul, in a state of separation from the body, they had a very plausible, and a very alluring theory. They considered that the soul, by passing into the spirit-state, had reached its final state, its ultimate perfection; that its union with the body was rather an impediment to its perfection, and therefore the separation was the thing to be wished for.

St. Thomas always fought shy of this easy explanation of the condition of the separated soul. For him the state of separation is never an absolute perfection—is never the final repose of the soul. He always considers that the union between soul



and body is for the benefit of the soul; and that separation means loss to the soul, as well as to the body.

This of course is to be understood independently of any supernatural privileges.

On the other hand, St. Thomas is not less emphatic and insistent in teaching that, at death, the soul enters into a spirit-state which it did not possess before.

There seems therefore to be an apparent contradiction, in his teaching, a contradiction that is not found in the theories of the Arab philosophers.

This difficulty is still more enhanced by St. Thomas's own teaching about the knowledge communicated to the separated soul, which according to him is granted through the instrumentality of the higher spirits. A vision of the whole of the material Universe, a clear perception of its own self as a spirit, which it did not possess in life, and finally, an at least approximate knowledge of the angelic nature in general, such is the intellectual outfit of the separated soul, good or bad.

In one word, St. Thomas teaches constantly that separation means the turning of the human intellect towards higher things; whilst in a state of

union with the body it is turned towards lower things. *whence "Ut mentes nostras ad c. desideria trahat" St. Thomas*

Nor does St. Thomas consider the state of the separated soul as being an anti-natural state, a violent, contradictory state. He only calls it a preternatural state, that is to say, a state which is not contemplated originally by Nature, but which, when it comes, is not a suffering, is not a privation, unless there be moral guilt in the soul.

With all this, I say, it seems difficult to understand his doctrine that the union between soul and body is for the good of the soul, and that the separation is after all a loss.

There would be one answer, to begin with, which might be at least a partial solution of the apparent contradiction. The knowledge poured into the separated soul, by the higher spirits, is a universal, vague knowledge, containing no particular, definite facts; it would require supernatural privileges to enter into the facts of the spirit-world; and happiness of thought does not come through a vague, abstract knowledge, but through the knowledge of the living fact.

This the soul receives through bodily senses here in life. In the state of separation, the soul

has higher knowledge, but no explicit knowledge of individual facts, except of a limited number. In the state of union, we only know lower things, but we know them explicitly, in their own particular mode; and this is the knowledge that makes happy, whilst the other knowledge seems to establish a great desire and craving for the explicit, individual fact. Yet to my mind, this would not fully establish the superiority of the state of union over that of separation. I offer therefore the following solution.

It is better for the soul to be separated from the body, as the body is now, after the Fall, a body entirely left to its organic resources, without any higher gifts from God. But it is a great loss to the soul to be separated from the body, as God made it first, in the state of innocence; as God will make it in the final resurrection, or anyhow, as God might make it, even now, if there were not the curse of original sin. United with bodies of that kind, the soul would have perceived the facts and events that occur in the material world, and at the same time would have contemplated the higher, the spiritual things.

But with our present supernatural privileges of soul, it is a decided gain for the soul to be separated from the body.

“For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. And if to live in the flesh, this is to me the fruit of labour, and what I shall choose I know not. But I am straightened between two, having a desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ, a thing by far the better” (Phil. i. 23).

“For we know, if our earthly house of this habitation be dissolved, that we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in heaven. For in this also we groan, desiring to be clothed over with our habitation that is from heaven. For we also, who are in this tabernacle, do groan being burdened, because we would not be unclothed but clothed over, that which is mortal may be swallowed up by life” (2. Cor. v. 1 2 4.).

Under the present dispensation, the body has no supernatural privileges, whilst the soul is full of them. When therefore the soul will be only herself, in the state of separation, her life will be a higher and happier life, than it is now, whilst the soul is united with a body destitute of supernatural qualities.

The happiest state of course will be the union of the glorified soul with a glorified body.

The one principle which St. Thomas wanted to save is this, that man is completely and perfectly



man, and therefore fully capable of human happiness only then, when he is composed of soul and body; a principle which the Arabian philosopher denied. But St. Thomas does not maintain that this is the case under every possible condition; there is at least one possibility for the human soul to be happier outside the body. It is, as I have said, the condition of those in whom the soul is highly privileged, whilst the body remains a body of sin.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### The Knowledge of the Disembodied Soul.

At death, the wall of flesh, that had hidden the spirit, crumbles away; the soul finds itself for ever in the spirit-world, where all is will and intellect, where sunrise is intellectual illumination and sunset the withholding of further knowledge; where cold and heat are will-fixities of purpose and will-activities. And here we must remember first of all, how this new condition of things is practically independent of the intellectual evolution of the existence in the body, I mean intellectual evolution in opposition to volitive evolution, for important reasons, given in another chapter (Chapter 9).

The souls that left the growing body, before the child could distinguish its right hand from the left, form a vast nation. There was no intellectual development in their mortal days. Yet those souls are not thinner or smaller than the soul of the man who found out the laws of Universal Gravitation. In the state of separation, both "big and small" are equally exposed to the penetrating rays of the spirit-world.

And here we come to ask ourselves: "How are souls raised to spirit-life? How do they get spirit-knowledge?"

The theory of St. Thomas, respecting the method according to which the disembodied human soul acquires spirit-knowledge is wonderfully bold; at the same time, it is exceedingly simple.

The whole spirit-world constantly radiates forth knowledge, as the material world sends forth sensitive impressions. Spirits are incessantly at work; they never rest; and their activity is to impart knowledge.

Every spirit receives those communications in a measure dependent on his own capacity, his own power of grasping the thought. Nor is it in the power of a spirit to screen himself from the heat of those communications.

The disembodied soul is thus filled with high and vast thought, as the bodily eye, when open, is filled with the vision of all that lies within its horizon.

There is no distinction in this matter between holy and reprobate souls; those communications are, so to speak, a law of nature; they become the happiness of the upright will, and the despair of the perverted will.

The elect soul will be, of course, the object of further illumination, of a higher order. We speak in this chapter of the merely natural conditions, not of the privileged condition of the soul.

It is merely a conclusion of this doctrine of the knowledge-giving activities of the spirit-world, when the Angelic Doctor says, that every human soul, the moment it is separated from the body, has a full and complete knowledge of the material Universe and its laws, besides a general knowledge of the Spirit-Universe. This second kind of knowledge, however, is less distinct and explicit than the first.

The material world and its laws are something lower than the human soul; the soul, therefore, is equal to the task of comprehending them. Spirits properly so called are above the soul, and the soul is unequal to the task of comprehending them.

It may be difficult for us to realise that, for instance, in the degraded, besotted tramp I see lying on the roadside, there is a soul of such vast capacity that it would only take a drop of poison administered to the body, to make the soul live a colossal spirit-life, when there is hardly an appearance of soul on the sinstained countenance.

Yet, nothing short of this view, so constantly inculcated by our masters in theology, will give us the reason why the Son of God died on the Cross.

God could not die for anything small.

The question will be asked, no doubt: "Why does this illumination, on the part of the spirit-world, take place, with regard to the human soul, only after the separation from the body?"

Why should the body cover the soul "as with a sack of haircloth" to intercept spirit-illumination?

Why do our masters exact severance between soul and body, to pronounce that the sun of intellect has risen for the soul?

Why should it be impossible for the activities of the spirit-world to penetrate through our bodily tissues, to reach the soul, whilst it is in the body?



The answer of St. Thomas is simple in the extreme, so simple indeed that some might feel tempted to ask for deeper doctrine.

Whilst in the body, says Aquinas, the soul is all *effusa*, "poured out", over the body, i. e. exhausts itself in being the leavening, the raising principle of our bodily frame. In this activity, if activity it may be called, it has no perception for higher spirit-influence.

In other words (and this may have the appearance of being more learned than the simple words of Aquinas) there is a certain power of perception required, in order that the soul may be benefitted by the spirit-world activities; this perceptiveness the human soul does not possess, here on earth, through the very fact of its being all consumed in the task of giving higher life to the body.

We shall discuss presently the question how it is that, after all, separation from the body is not an unmixed happiness for the soul, in spite of this flood of new knowledge.

In order that an organic brain should be able to work as our brain does work, a spirit must spend itself in being its "psychic leaven".

On the other hand, our philosophy is far from being niggardly in this matter of spirit-knowledge, for the disembodied human soul.

Happiness comes from the rectitude of the spirit-will; knowledge alone, unless it be of the secrets of God, is indifferent material for spirit-happiness.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### The State of the Soul.

There is one conclusion, that follows from the absolute immateriality of the disembodied human soul, the practical momentum of which is enormous. After we have realised the utter detachment of the disembodied human soul from matter, time and space, we ask ourselves this question, with a kind of awe: "How then do souls differ? What makes them to be high or low?"

For the soul, we have not got the specific differentiation that makes of every angel another star in the spirit-world. All human souls are equal in spirit-rank.

The answer is this: it is the moral state of the soul that matters; the soul is differentiated through its state; it is high and safe through its state, when all differentiations of matter, time and space

are gone. The moral state will be its burden or it will be its wings.

As our masters say so shrewdly, the disembodied soul passes without any local movement from the state of soul into the state of pure spirit; and the distance travelled through that simple change of state is almost infinite.

But the spirit-state itself is again modified by the moral state; and so the change of state is a passing—without local displacement—into eternal sanctity, or eternal sin. This then is the meaning of an often repeated term in our theological manuals *Status animae*, “The state of the soul”.

We take here the state of the soul as it is, at the very last fraction of time of its union with the body; it is called a state, because it is a real, permanent, deeply ingraven moulding of the soul, not mere transitory acts and facts and emotions. The human soul makes itself, acquires a permanent moral attitude or character, which united with Sanctifying Grace, establishes it in a kind of spiritual stature.

Now this state is not given; it is acquired through a succession of personal acts. The reason of this is obvious. Every being has activity; the

higher the being, the higher the activity. Amongst terrestrial beings, the human soul is the highest; therefore it must have highest activity, and its perfection or state will be the result of its activities, united with God's co-operation.

And here, I should like to speak of a subject that lies near to my heart. Our lot is cast with a generation which idolises action and activity. But through an inexplicable contradiction (though perhaps a searcher of the heart would not think it a contradiction), spiritual activity and enterprise are not popular.

We live with men who are tossed about by every wind of doctrine in the things of the spirit; and yet their minds and their hearts do not suffer from the uncertainty; they consider that God, who has made them what they are, will make it all right. Why should they strive after spiritual truth and perfection?

They have lost the old Christian notion of the importance of the moral state of the soul; for simple expectation of a gratuitous action of God, to come in and mend matters, when needed, is no moral perfection. It is no step towards acquiring a moral state; it is repose and standstill in spiritual things.



The attitude just expressed, and which is that of many an honest Englishman, is not a defensible attitude. It has no parallel in all we know of the laws of God and the World. The whole genius of the Scriptures is against it. In their own lives, social and economical, these men exhibit the direct opposite of that attitude. In Nature all is activity; and what is more, a specific result is always the fruit of some specific activity. There is no such thing as substitution for the activities of natural powers. The life of every human being, the disadvantages of birth, of mind, of body, are not made good by any extra-providence; they may be corrected to a great extent by personal extra-effort; they are never corrected by extra-providence.

In their practical lives, men do not consider that a disadvantage in which they are placed, and which is not of their own doing, is a reason for settling down comfortably to its inconveniences, on the principle that the disadvantage is not of their own making. If they do settle down to it, it will be considered by all thoughtful men, that they have only themselves to blame for being hindmost in the race. It is only when they come to the

concerns of the soul, to the highest part of man, that men reason differently, and they bring themselves to believe that spiritual or religious disadvantages need not make them enterprising, need not send them off into the research of what is good and what is true. There is really no justification for this comfortable acquiescence in what we know to be religious poverty.

If now we turn to the Bible, England's greatest Power, is not its genius, essentially, a genius of spiritual enterprise, making of the research of truth and sanctity man's first duty? There is no one more lenient with regard to the eternal fate of the non-Catholic than the Catholic theologian. He knows how to draw the distinction between wilful error and unavoidable error. One of the earliest distinctions with which the young student in theology is made acquainted is the distinction between *ignorantia vincibilis* and *ignorantia invincibilis*, ignorance that may be overcome, and ignorance that cannot be overcome.

Man cannot help erring; but lack of solicitude for his eternal welfare, and for the means of bringing it about, is a moral deformity. The very effort to strive after truth, is a high moral act; it shapes

the soul, even if the truth cannot be found; and great will be the mercies meted out to the humble inquirer.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### Virtue, the Soul's Greatness.

It is a principle of Catholic theology, of which the importance cannot be exaggerated, that a spirit's position, with God, depends entirely on the psychological properties possessed by the spirit.

We are in the eyes of God, what we are in ourselves; if we are great before God, we are great through qualities which are an inherent property of our own personality.

To be great in the eyes of God, is simply to possess great psychological properties, and there is no such thing as mere external imputation of any dignity or state or sanctity, on the part of God. Imputation is a term fabricated by the reforming theologians of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. According to them, man can have no inherent quality that makes him into a saint; he is radically unfit for it; but God thinks of him as of a holy being, out of consideration for Christ's sanctity.

This is called justification or sanctity by imputation. I quote this tenet of Reforming theology

as an instance referring not only to sanctification, but to every possible branch of moral elevation. Imputation on the part of God is repulsive to Catholic theology, as an unreality, a sham, unworthy of eternal Truth.

Whatever greatness and dignity we have in the spirit-world, is always and everywhere a greatness of mind and a greatness of will.

It might be said truly that Catholic theology on justification and sanctification is all psychological. The wonderful work of Redemption results into ever so many psychological effects for the human individual. Redemption is not a great spiritual drama, to be looked at and wondered at, but it is a great spiritual power, that is to transform individual souls, to make them live a higher life. Catholic theology is not surprised at any height of supernatural psychological perfection to which a human soul may be raised through the active operation of Redemption.

The soul of the redeemed is a holy thing, a thing full of spiritual excellencies, a marvel to God's angels, a terror to the spirits of darkness, a living temple of the Holy Ghost, a vessel of election full of the sweetness of the Spirit of God.



It is, I know, a view of which the orthodox Protestant is entirely destitute. For him, Redemption is the gratuitous saving of the unworthy, remaining in his state of unworthiness. He knows nothing of the exhilarating beauties of the sanctified soul, that make it to be full of grace and loveliness to God Himself. The Protestant makes of salvation a transaction entirely external to man, whilst, in the eyes of the Catholic, man is saved then only, when his soul is beautiful and strong.

I said that all our greatness in the eyes of God is greatness either of mind or of will. Greatness of mind is the reward, greatness of will is the merit.

This is why Catholic theology attaches so much importance both in theory and in practice to virtue, as virtue is the greatness of the will, both in time and in eternity.

Virtues are the ornament of the soul, its greatness, its royal priesthood, its nobility; virtues, from the very fact of being virtues, are what we might call the most subjective portion of the spirit; they become part and parcel of the spirit himself.

It is true that some virtues are given to the soul by God; but the gift does not make them less the soul's property, residing in the innermost

sources of its being; for it is in the power of God who created the spirit, and gave it its individuality, to bestow on it new and higher qualities that make it greater and stronger; God is able (and He alone is able) to give new things to a spirit, which yet are part of what is most vital in the spirit. God alone can enter into the sources of our soul, and there deposit new seeds of life that spring up into the soul's own life.

A great man said that to him the *Summa* of St. Thomas was a greater epic than Homer's *Odyssey*; so likewise the workings of virtues in a soul are the only dramas and tragedies worth our interest. It is there where the spirit stands and falls, and where the World is eternally divided.

## CHAPTER XX.

### **The Body's Share in Spiritual Life.**

Spiritual life is not the same thing as spirit-life. Spirit-life is in the activities of a pure spirit; spiritual life may be found in activities that are bodily activities.

Spiritual life as distinguished from spirit-life is found in man only; there is no such distinction possible with the pure disembodied spirit. A spirit's

life may be a holy or an unholy life; it may be a happy or an unhappy life, but it could not be called a spiritual or unspiritual life.

Spiritual life is primarily bodily life, but bodily life that is for the benefit of the spirit, i. e. the human soul. Nothing would be more dangerous than to make spiritual life consist exclusively in the spirit-acts of the soul, if there be any such acts in mortal life. Such a definition would exclude from spiritual life that portion of man which is most obvious and most directly present to him, his senses, his body.

Spiritual life is the life of the body, the life of the senses shaped in such a fashion as to be both worthy of, and beneficial to the soul. If spiritual life were to consist exclusively of the spirit-acts of the soul, the greatest portion of our activities, in this mortal existence, would at once be outside the pale of spirituality.

Catholicity is the most spiritual religion in the World, and Catholicity has never found it necessary to condemn the body, as an obstacle to spiritual life. Catholic philosophy, on the contrary, has made the soul's progress depend on the soul's union with the body.

There is no spiritual life after the separation between soul and body; it will be merely spirit-life, happy or unhappy, holy or unholy. The old Christian doctrine that all growth in sanctity ceases with death, ought at once to make us realise what share the body must have in spiritual life.

Now it is against the very genius of Catholic spirituality to consider that the cessation in the power of meriting or rather of growing, is an arbitrary disposition of Providence. God deals with His creatures according to their nature, and He never takes away from them any powers or any possibilities of which they may be possessed. Whatever happens to the soul, happens to it as a result of its own inherent laws. Therefore the cessation for the soul of growth in spiritual perfection, which, as we have said, is the result of the separation of the soul from the body, must be owing exclusively to the body's death: in other words, the body is the intrinsic, necessary, and indispensable condition of growth in spiritual perfection.

All this points to a profound truth: Spiritual life is the highest moral life of the body.

Such a view of spiritual life ought to be welcome to man, as his soul is something far too hidden,



far too difficult to seize upon. Its very existence is brought home to him only through elaborate reasonings. If spiritual life were defined as the life of the spirit, it ought at once to be classed among the unfeasible, the unpracticable things; far from its being man's daily and hourly aim, it could not be anything but an exceptional state.

Every act of spiritual life requires the activity of our senses, or anyhow the concurrence of our senses. First there is a vast amount of spiritual activity which is done directly by the senses. In the second place, even those acts that approach pure spirit-life are not possible without the concurrence of the senses, through the same reasons that make thought and will in us universally dependent on the co-operation of the senses. Thirdly, all the external results of our internal sanctity are dependent on our sense-activities, and the sense-activities are practically the only reliable tokens of the sincerity of the more hidden dispositions of the will, or of the soul generally.

To be more explicit, all those attractive and ennobling virtues that may be classed under the heading of purity and which contribute so much towards our spirituality, are all the doing of our

senses. It is the body that is chaste; it is the body that is temperate. The soul could not be said to have habits of that kind, except metaphorically, from the very fact of its being a spirit.

Strength and courage are another class of virtue, with many subdivisions. Now strength and courage are again bodily dispositions; the soul could not be said to possess such virtues, except metaphorically.

Prayer on the other hand, I mean the intimate conversation of the soul with God, to select one instance only, is an activity that is more spirit-like. But prayer is not possible without the constant concurrence of our higher senses, our imaginative and affective powers.

Religion of the heart would be a most uncertain virtue if it did not express itself in external worship, in the praise of the lips, in the reverence of the body.

Nothing would be easier than to hold a survey of all the virtuous acts and dispositions of man; and it would be found invariably that they are either virtuous dispositions of the senses themselves or acts of the soul, which are impossible without the concurrence of the senses; or are acts whose very sincerity requires external bodily manifestation.

We are right therefore in saying that for all practical purposes spiritual life is not so much spirit-life, as the higher life of the body.

Spiritual life, so to speak, is the highest and noblest way the body has to assert itself. To speak of spiritual life as the life that does not take count of the body, if anything be meant by such a phrase, is the direct contradiction of traditional Catholic spirituality.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### **Mortification.**

Mortification has held and still holds too important a place in the Christian, or at least in the Catholic view of life, to be omitted in a treatise on the human soul. The subject would follow naturally the considerations we have just made, on the body's share in spiritual life.

We said that spiritual life gives to the body its best opportunity of asserting itself. Would it not appear as if the importance attached in Catholicity to mortification, hardly bore out this assertion?

I confess willingly that nothing would be easier than to fill a volume with quotations from orthodox writers preaching, in every kind of language, the

destruction of the body of sin. A Buddhist who seeks after spiritual life, through the extinction of bodily activity, might easily quote Christian writers with a view to justify his conduct. The saints have done and said hard things against the body; they have called the body their greatest enemy, to which there ought to be no quarter given. How are we to reconcile that incessant wailing over the body's iniquities, that desperate persecution of the body, with the view that the body finds in spiritual life its best chance for asserting itself?

I make so bold as to say, that a certain amount of Christian language in that matter of mortification is both metaphorical and hyperbolical. I go even further and say that, besides exaggerated language, there has been occasionally, or even frequently, exaggerated acting in individual cases. The Church is not responsible for the over-fervid behaviour of some of her best children.

Mortification is the effect of courage, and, like all courage, it has a tendency for striking too hard, for degenerating into foolhardiness.

Owing to our limited nature, even our virtues cast shadows. We suffer from our own perfections, and the brave man easily becomes an in-



tolerant man. It will be useful, in daily life, to remember that the possession of one virtue does not mean all-round perfection. We need not hesitate to make these concessions to truth, as there has always been in the Church of God a most clear teaching concerning the rôle of mortification. We might call it the Church's official doctrine on mortification. The Church has never erred through excess in that matter; if anything, the Church has curbed the ardour of the saint and the ascetic.

There is perhaps hardly a subject, in the practical order of things, in which heresy would be easier, than in this subject of mortification. And heresies there have been, because nothing looks so much like virtue as man's hardness with his own body, as most men sin and are known by all men to be sinners, through their indulgence to the body.

Mortification, in the Catholic sense, is essentially the asserting of the body, not its negation. The aim of mortification is to strengthen virtue. The Church never took any other view of mortification. Now virtue is in the senses; it is the highest perfection of the senses; it is purity and strength of character. Mortification is to mortify or to deaden,

not the senses, but those unruly appetites that weaken the sense of purity, that weaken the moral fibre of man. To make a man pure and to make a man strong, such is the aim of mortification. To repress anything, to abstain from anything, without that end in view, is not a virtuous act, but an unwise act, an imprudent act, an act that is against reason.

But there is a difficulty here.

It is comparatively easy to know what kind of abnegations foster purity and modesty, foster the dignity of the human body; but it would appear that there is no limit to the exercise of fortitude, which is another word for strength of character. In order to become strong, shall we not afflict our body without interruption and without mercy? For would it not seem that he is strongest, who can hold out longest? So it would appear that, if bodily mortification, bodily hardships are at all taken up, to acquire fortitude, there is no limit to mortification, as fortitude is greatest then, when it bears the longest and sharpest pain.

Our masters have provided us with the answer to this dangerous sophistry.

Man is not made perfect so much through bearing hard things. Sin and its consequences, sooner or

later, are the hardest things to bear, and yet they leave man in his state of depravity. To bear a hard thing, does not make man strong; but to bear a hard thing, which is at the same time a wise thing, makes him strong. Such hardships only create moral strength as are necessary in order to do what wisdom and prudence command. As St. Augustine says, it is not death, but it is the cause of the death that makes the martyr.

There is, however, in Catholic sanctity a sacrifice of the body which could not be called mortification, though it resembles mortification. It is not intended as a protection to purity, as an exercise of courage, but as a holocaust to God, as a sacrifice, as an atonement for personal sin, or for the sin of mankind. Such are the most adorable of all sufferings, the sufferings of Christ on the Cross.

Sufferings of that kind do not come under the heading of mortification. Their explanation is more theological than psychological. There have been sufferings of that kind in the lives of the Saints, whose desire it was to resemble Christ crucified, to renew in their bodies the sufferings of Christ.

Such sufferings need not alarm us; it is part of their purpose to be according to the dictates of

wisdom. Christ suffered as much as the Father in His wisdom had exacted; and when He had fulfilled the measure, He pronounced His *Consummatum est*. So likewise the Saint, in the imitation of his crucified Saviour, will keep the measure of wisdom, in his eagerness to resemble Christ crucified.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### Mortal Sin, the Evil of the Soul.

"They that commit sin and iniquity are enemies to their own soul" (Tob. xii. 1).

A Catholic instinctively thinks of sin as the evil of the soul. He knows that by committing sin he becomes the enemy of his own soul, in the words of the archangel Raphael, just quoted.

Some people think that the very fact of being a spirit makes sin impossible, and that to arrive at the spirit-state, is to arrive at sinlessness. This of course is diametrically opposed to Catholic dogma. Sin is possible only with spiritual beings.

The sin of Lucifer and his angels was all the greater because it was committed by pure spirits.

Mortal sin is essentially a disorder; it is a breaking of the universal harmony.



Man belongs to God, to mankind, and to himself. He sins because he puts himself in opposition to God or to mankind, or to himself.

Belonging to God, he owes to God duties of religion; they are the most necessary and the most sacred part of his moral life. He owes to God subjection of intellect and will. To neglect any of his duties towards God, or to rebel against God with intellect or will is a grievous disorder, because man has placed himself in opposition to the in-created order and harmony.

As a member of mankind, the human individual has towards mankind duties of love and justice. The violation of those duties puts him into opposition to the human order; he is in a state of disorder.

Finally, man is not a simple entity; he is a composition of spirit and body; harmony and order for him are attained when the body obeys the spirit.

If man were not a composite being, he could not sin against himself; there would be only the two preceding disorders for him; but being two in one, it will be disorder, if the lower part of his being is not subject to the higher part.

It is not unusual to hear people say: "As long as my act remains within myself, where is the sin? I have not hurt anyone."

This is a dangerous sophism. Man is bound more to himself than to mankind; he has to watch over the harmony between his soul and his body.

The harmony between soul and body comes next after the harmony between the mind and God. St. Thomas Aquinas teaches that suicide is a greater sin than murder. This is the reason why acts of deliberate unlawful indulgence are to be considered as grievous moral transgressions, though there is no wrong done to anyone, except to the sinner himself.

Sin becomes the concern of the soul as such, through free will.

Free will is an entirely spiritual power; there is nothing of sense-activity in it. Now free will makes and mars the soul.

Free will has a twofold way of coming into a sinful deed: by a direct act and by consent.

Free will does evil directly through itself; for instance when there is the resolution of doing an injustice to one's neighbour, the will makes itself guilty directly. But in sensual indulgence, the sinful

act is done by the body. But as the will could have prevented it, but did not, the free will sinned by consent; thus the sensual indulgence became the sin of the spiritual soul.

The more there is of free will in a sinful act, the more there is of guilt; and sins done by the will directly are sins in a fuller measure than the sins committed by mere consent.

We come now to an aspect of sin, which I might call Catholic, and which belongs to Catholic dogma.

Mortal sin, of whatever category, is always a grievous injury done to God's Majesty, not only sins committed directly against God, such as blasphemy, but also sins which are not a violation of a duty to God, as for instance sins of impurity.

Thus, the impure man, through his guilty indulgence, has offended God. Even if we had no rational explanation for this indirect result of sin, we should have to believe it through Faith. A sinful act can never be a merely philosophical disorder, without theological results. God is offended through every grievous moral disorder of man. The atheist himself could not avoid offending God through his moral transgressions.

Our masters give this explanation: God is infinite Beauty; and as such has a strict right to be the object of every creature's aspirations, to be every creature's last end and eternal resting place. Through moral obliquity, committed wilfully, the sinner, as far as in him lies, makes himself unfit for the eternal Beauty, the eternal Good, and thus offends against the rights of that Beauty which is ever old and ever new.

It is, I think, clear from what has been said, that we make of the spiritual upheaval the one disastrous result that makes sin so frightful.

We have all come across people whom we are justified in calling slaves of sin, men in whom repeated acts of sensual intemperance have produced evil habits, sinful cravings; their character has been radically ruined; their moral habits are irremediably warped. The most common and most frequent case is the drunkard. In him we see how the wages of sin are death, how the sinner bears the mark of his sin deep in his body. Yet this is only a surface phenomenon.

The sociologist is chiefly interested in this aspect of sin. The theologian sees deeper. For him, the disorder lies in the spirit itself. There is an irremedi-



able opposition in that spirit to universal harmony. It is what is called the stain of sin. It is a mortal wound, to be healed only by miraculous grace; its first result is to make the soul absolutely unfit for the possession of Sanctifying Grace, and consequently of eternal life, of the vision of God.

The opposition of a soul in mortal sin to Sanctifying Grace is a necessary, unchanging opposition. This becomes evident if we consider that Sanctifying Grace is the created participation of God's increated Beauty, whilst mortal sin establishes the soul in a state of moral hideousness.

We do not say that the loss of Sanctifying Grace is mortal sin. What we say is this: mortal sin is a moral decay of the soul incompatible with Sanctifying Grace. The first mortal sin committed by man banishes from his soul all the graces it had received, even if they had been high enough to make him into a seraph. Subsequent mortal sins have the same evil effects as the first. Generally the evil of the second is greater than the evil of the first, though no grace is driven out of the soul; but the spirit is corrupted more profoundly, makes himself more unfit for the return of grace and puts himself into a state of opposition to universal

harmony, that will make his loss, to be death within death. For we believe that the main suffering of the lost soul in eternal reprobation is the direct and necessary result of the wilful disorderly act. The greater the will's distortion, the keener the realisation of the loss, of utter disorderliness.

We must remember, however, that this corruption of the spirit of which we are speaking here, is not to be understood as a weakening of mental power, as a blunting of the edge of will and intellect, so that a time might come when through the accumulation of sins the spiritual powers of the soul should have reached a minimum of activity.

This takes place sometimes in the body, when senses commit sin. But the spirit never loses its vividness and energy; its corruption therefore must be understood in the sense of an accumulation of positive acts, of oppositions to the harmony of the Universe. The will is getting, as it were, stronger and bolder to carry the burden of its iniquity.

An instance from life might serve here. A man who once entangles himself in unfair business transactions, never loses any of his shrewdness or his callousness through his going deeper and deeper

into felony and malpractice. In fact, the small roguery prepares him for the big one, till he finds himself hopelessly in opposition to the rights of the society in which he lives.

So with the accumulation of entirely spiritual stains; their repetition, far from weakening the spirit, establishes it in a more resolute opposition to eternal harmony.

These are the most important points to be remembered concerning the enemy of our soul. We do not wonder, therefore, that the saint has such a horror of sin, as he feels keenly the beauty and greatness of the soul, and as he knows that nothing but the soul's own act can be a danger, or a poison, to it.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### Venial Sin.

Catholic theology is not only clear in its views on the nature and result of sin, it is also wise and prudent in distinguishing between sin and sin. If there is mortal sin, there is also venial sin; and with the courage that makes Catholic theology pronounce mortal sin to be the evil of the soul, is united the wisdom that makes it declare venial sin to be no loss of God. In fact venial sin is not sin on a

small scale, whilst mortal sin is sin on a large scale; but venial sin is to mortal sin, what a wound in a strong and healthy body is to a corpse; it is not a comparison between a big wound and a small wound; but venial sin is a curable wound in a live body, whilst mortal sin is to be likened unto death.

Nowhere do we find that gift of prudence, which is the special gift of Catholic theology, come out stronger than in this doctrine of venial sin. The Pharisee might take scandal at some of the conclusions of theology.

Sin is venial for two reasons: first on account of the incompleteness of the human act; secondly, on account of the transgression being merely of secondary laws.

Speaking of mortal sin we said that all its guilt comes from the fact of the will having a part in it. Now, we may easily conceive, and the study of human nature gives us many practical instances, how human passion may reach a disproportionate violence; the control of the will over the passion is no longer complete. The predominance of sensuality is such as to enslave the will. In a case like this, what would have been mortal sin, becomes venial sin, owing to the will's imperfect control.



Mortal sin requires free will not impeded in its action through any preponderance of the lower appetites. The attraction of sensuality must not be more than an allurements to the will, if the will's freedom is to be preserved. It would of course be very difficult, in individual cases, to decide whether or not the lower appetites left the spiritual will enough freedom to assert its control; it is the secret of God Who searches the heart and the reins. But theology asserts the universal principle that may at least make us careful in judging our brother, as we do not know the working of his soul. In practice, too, we had better admit to ourselves the full guilt of our deed, and not flatter ourselves that perhaps we were not quite responsible for the act that makes us blush.

But by far the greatest number of venial sins come from the nature of the precept transgressed. There are transgressions of the universal laws that are the destruction of the moral order and moral harmony; they make mortal sin.

Then there are transgressions which are no such destruction.

To speak a deliberate falsehood, in a matter that will not be a grievous wrong to a neighbour, will

only be a venial sin, because it is considered that such a transgression is not a destruction of the universal order. We suppose here that the sin is committed with a clear knowledge and full freedom; but this circumstance does not make it into a mortal sin. Through an act of deliberate falsehood, detached from injury to the neighbour, no vital law of the Universe has been violated. Deliberation in the act, as such, does not make a transgression mortal, as many people suppose, when on the other hand there is no vital law violated. Any amount of deliberation will not make the sin more than venial, in that case.

It would be very difficult for the human reason to define which of the laws of the moral order are vital or non-vital. The best thinkers have erred greatly, in apportioning to the various aberrations of the human heart their proper measure of guilt. This incapability in man, of determining the relative importance of the elements that make the moral order, is one of the facts that postulate a divine authority to guide man.

With the utterances of the Sacred Scriptures and the definitions of the Church, we Catholics are fully instructed in this most burning question. There is not one species of moral aberrations which, if con-

sidered objectively, has not been labelled by Catholic theology as either mortal or venial. It gives great peace to the Christian conscience, and prevents pharisaical pruderies.

One of the doctrines insisted upon by our masters is this: venial sin does not diminish Sanctifying Grace, does not reduce the measure of divine charity that is found in the soul. Venial sin, as it were, has no power on the higher parts of the human soul. Just as there may be differences amongst friends, that are not the death of friendship, so likewise there may be differences where God and the soul are concerned, that leave the divine life in the soul. This is a favourite simile with theologians, when treating of the result of venial sin.

They say that venial sin is no diminution of the Sanctifying Grace that is in the soul. For all along, even in the most deliberate act of venial sin, man has his ultimate aspirations fixed on God. For he knows that the act of moral imperfection he is committing does not ruin his soul, and therefore does not make him incapable of possessing the divine Good.

St. Thomas says frequently that venial sin is not against grace but outside grace; he even goes so

far as to say that grace is the master of the human will in the very act of committing venial sin. This is to be understood to mean that sanctifying grace and charity so control the human will in the act of committing the venial sin, that the act would not be committed by the will, if it were a mortal sin.

So far we have considered venial sin from what I might call its comparative side, comparing it with mortal sin; mortal sin is the evil of evils; so we need not be surprised to find the sin that is not mortal, looking so very different.

But nothing would be less Catholic than to speak or think of venial sin lightly. It is a great evil, but an evil that is compatible with the privileges of the children of God. For all along I have taken the case of a soul in Sanctifying Grace, committing venial sin. We know that a man in a state of mortal sin may commit venial sin, as well as the man in a state of grace; in that case, venial sin is chiefly a hindrance for the sinner to come back to God, and conversion will be more difficult, owing to it.

Venial sins are a disobedience, and are punished as such, by temporary and finite punishments. To make full amends for them would not require a Divine Redeemer, as mortal sin does; the soul that



has committed venial sin, may make full amends, if it be in the state of grace.

Another axiom of which theologians are fond, is this: No accumulation of venial sins will ever make one mortal sin.

On the other hand, the chief mischief of venial sin lies in the fatal power it has to pave the way to mortal sin. This of course must be understood only of the fully deliberate venial sin. It is simply a psychological law that repeated venial sin, committed with all due deliberation, must of necessity lessen in the soul the horror for sin and evil generally. It must deprive it of that delicacy of conscience which is the soul's greatest safeguard. The removal of these safeguards makes the soul an easy prey to serious moral transgression.

There is only one more remark to make with regard to the soul's relation to sin.

Venial sin could only be a human phenomenon, not an angelic one; even more, it is a phenomenon of mortal life only. The angel and the disembodied soul cannot sin venially. The reason of this is to be found in that kind of divisibility which our mental operations have in this life. Now we can do things by halves; and when one part of the

moral man is distorted, the main part may still be sound and whole.

No such divisibility is possible for a spirit, who, whatever he does, does it with the totality of his powers.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### **The Soul's Responsibility.**

As sin is essentially the act of the will, I intend in this chapter to say more on the soul's share in the commission of sin, and its responsibility for that act. It is not my intention, however, to discuss human responsibility from the point of view of human freedom, or liberty; I take human freedom for granted. I view the soul's responsibility from the diversity of powers and faculties in the human individual; the question is this: which of man's faculties is answerable for the deeds done in the body? Multiplicity of faculties or powers is the most striking feature in man's individuality.

Broadly speaking, we may distinguish in man two regions: the animal and the spirit. This division is based on the primordial fact of man being a compound of a spiritual soul and a material body.

Catholic philosophy never spiritualised the body, and never materialised the soul.

But this broad distinction into two regions has to be stated with a qualification. As soul and body form one person, the two must be united in some way. The soul, from its spirit-nature, being the main factor, could not be said to be united to the body, unless it be through a direct act of beneficent influence on the body, as I have said already.

Here then we have a third element of great importance. In man there is that part which comes from the fact of animal senses being raised, through the presence of a spiritual substance, to a much higher level of activity and potentiality, and acquiring through it a new power no animal could ever possess. It is a most important element in the Catholic philosophy of man. These new faculties could not be spirit-faculties. They are essentially sense-faculties, but sense-faculties of an exceedingly high order, of wonderful resourcefulness. Our masters give them a generic name; they call them *Cogitativa*. They give them a wonderfully wide range of psychological activity; and things which the uninitiated might put down to the pure spirit-intellect in man, theologians still consider to be within the possibilities of *Cogitativa*.

So the hierarchy would be this: on the summit, there is the spirit-intellect, with the corresponding

spirit-will, where there is freedom of choice; it is the soul as such, in itself, not the soul's results. Then there is this wonderful *Cogitativa*, with its corresponding appetites, which we cannot call "will", because "will" is reserved to the spirit's free choice, though we are perfectly safe in calling it a lower will. It is the region of senses, but the highest, purest region amongst senses. The noblest and greatest results of the soul's influence on the body are there. Then there come the powers and activities and appetites which we share with other animals and which physical science and medical wisdom have taken for their province.

The second region, *Cogitativa*, is of greater interest than any other in the psychology of man. It is there, where education, heredity, surroundings do so much. The theologian, to my knowledge, who gave *Cogitativa* its full importance, is the great disciple of St. Thomas, Cajetan; he gives it an initial and imperfect reflective free will tendency. But in this he only follows his great master Aquinas.

I can not enter into all the psychological considerations and critical observations the subject suggests; enough for me here to say, that our masters give to the senses of man as much as any



modern materialists ever did; they are wise materialists; they differ from the modern materialist, not in giving to the spirit what does not belong to the spirit, but in asserting that in man's life there are phenomena which are absolutely beyond the senses, beyond even that higher region called *Cogitativa*.

Their position is unassailable, as they give a purely spirit-explanation for phenomena for which the materialist has no explanation at all, and for which he cannot have any explanation.

Our masters compare *Cogitativa* with the instincts of some clever animal. But this is only a comparison. They give *Cogitativa* a much higher range than mere animal instinct. Instinct enables the animal to judge in certain particular things that belong to the preservation of its life. So *Cogitativa* is a faculty of judging in all things in which there enter no Universals (Chapter 15).

We see at a glance what a wide range this gives to *Cogitativa*, and how many of our deeds are done there.

But to come to responsibility, how far are we accountable for the acts of *Cogitativa*? I take *Cogitativa* here, both as a knowing and a willing

power. Cajetan, the great master, gives *Cogitativa*, quite independently of the intellectual soul, enough free will for venial sin; mortal sin there could never be there, because it is only the region of the senses, though it be the summit of them.

Most of the sinful impulses in man have in *Cogitativa* not only their origin, but also their battlefield. It is the region of our passions. If sin is delight and pleasure taken in evil, it is *Cogitativa* that has the pleasure, that is delighted. It is what our masters express when they say that our senses, or at least our higher senses, are *subiectum peccati*. "The region where sin takes place."

How then is it possible that any of the transgressions or disorders that happen there, should be mortal transgressions, should be grievous sins, entailing the loss of Sanctifying Grace, that wonderful gift which abides not in the summit of the senses, but in the summit of the spirit? The spirit-will, our masters say, gives its consent, and by giving that consent to *Cogitativa*, it has made itself guilty of the grievous transgression, not because it transgressed grievously itself, but because it did not prevent the transgression it could have prevented. The spirit, of course, or rather the spirit-will has

its own transgressions, its own disorders; such for instance would be the act of the man who willingly and deliberately schemes the financial ruin of his neighbour; or again such is the act of the proud mind, unwilling to submit to higher authority, from sheer pride. But what we mean to say here is this, that even the highest senses cannot be said to be entirely responsible for their acts to the tribunal of morality. The immaterial spirit-will must come in, at least as the consenting party.

These considerations have another advantage: they may help us to establish what I may call the hierarchy of guilt. Nothing could be more profitable to men of our generation than a clear and certain gradation of moral depravities. Our countrymen, unfortunately, are ill instructed in the appreciation of moral guilt; more and more people seem to judge the gravity of sin from social results.

The greatest moral depravity is to be found in intellectual sins, rebellions of the mind against revealed Divine Truth and established authority. Next come the sins against justice. These two classes of sins are the exclusive acts of the spirit-will of man.

Then, and only then, come the sins, that might be called generically sins against morality. As far

as those sins do not imply a violation of duty to the neighbour or to society, by giving scandal or by doing harm otherwise, they make man less guilty, though they make him more contemptible in the eyes of society.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### Distinction between Vice and Sin.

The foregoing chapter has prepared us for a distinction that may help charity greatly, and on that account I work it out more fully here.

Catholic philosophy may be said to be an extremely charitable philosophy, if we take Charity here for a kindly interpretation of our neighbour's deeds. It judges no man, though it be so uncompromising about the claims of reason, though it never calls good evil, or evil good. It distinguishes most clearly between virtue and vice, moral order and moral disorder, but never says of any man that he has offended God.

Catholic philosophy made free will, and free will only, the region where there can be sin. The tendency of Catholic philosophy is to restrict the limits of that portion of our soul, where there can be sin, rather than to extend them. It never



considers as sin any depravity which man cannot help. By distinction upon distinction the Catholic view of sin has become the most rational view.

There is one distinction amongst all other distinctions, which deserves our attention here. It is the distinction between vice and its responsibility, or guilt. Vice, that most harsh of English terms, stands in philosophy for any confirmed habit of mind, and will, and body, which becomes an endless source of moral shortcomings.

Vice being a confirmed habit of easy observation, we know when a man has it, and we know too when he gives way to it; we cannot, and need not shut our eyes to the fact, though we are not justified in talking about it to everyone.

We have all known men who are the slaves of intemperance. Charity being the queen of virtues, has open eyes, and does not bid us to doubt the existence of black spots that are patent.

The same with mental or intellectual inferiorities; not only need we not coerce ourselves into a belief that such and such are wise, prudent and thoughtful men, when everybody speaks of the rashness and foolishness of their deeds. In fact many times we are strictly bound to take in our neighbour's calibre;

we are strictly bound to have a low opinion, say of his prudence; we have to avoid putting our trust in his judgement. Scripture frequently insists on the avoiding of the fool.

There is the gift of discretion of spirits, that helps us to distinguish the capable and reliable from the incapable and unreliable. But at the same time, we are never authorised to judge, we never have any ground for judgment.

Vice may be in a man and frequently is in a man not through his own act. If it were known of any individual that his depraved habits are the results of repeated free acts, it would be certain in that case that, in the past, he had offended God, because the acts were free. But the evil habit once acquired, though it be through free acts, is no longer a free disposition, and I am never in a position to say that he is a sinner, because he has sinful dispositions.

The offence to God is the free determination of the will to select the forbidden pleasure. When is it that such a free determination takes place in the breast of a man? I do not know, God alone knows.

I know a certain man to be a hopeless case of disorderliness, rashness and imprudence, but I can

never say that he is a sinner, because I have no means of watching the acts of his free will. Those moral shortcomings, called vicious habits, far from giving us the measure of a man's guilt, ought to have the opposite effect, as it is in their nature to curtail the freedom of action and choice, in man. The eye of God, many times, sees an upright will under all the mental eccentricities and ethical infirmities that cover some unfortunate human being, as with a cloak of malediction, to the eye of man.

The opposite proposition too, no doubt, finds its application in the human heart, i. e. that where there is a cool head and most accomplished moral character, there may be rebellion against God, which is the greatest of all sins. In practice, for the purposes of life, we have to know of many people what shortcomings they suffer from, as our lives are bound up with theirs; but this is all we need know. Whether they are sinners in the eyes of God, is not matter of any earthly concern, and to my mind this distinction between vice and guilt is one that will make us patient with the moral infirmities of our brothers.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

## Original Sin and the Human Soul.

The theology of the human soul would indeed be most incomplete without an exposition of the doctrine of original sin. Original sin is the first line in the history of the human soul.

The unpopularity of this old Christian dogma with the modern mind could hardly be an excuse for omitting to state its doctrine here. I feel confident, in fact, that nothing can reconcile the thinking mind with original sin except an exact and technical exposition of it, as we find it in the writings of our masters. The one consideration that is of paramount importance in this matter is this: all the evils and all the harm done to the human soul through the fall, and through original sin, are evils by comparison with a higher good. Original sin cannot be described in itself; it has to be stated by comparison, and the term of comparison is the high and privileged state in which man was created originally; we must keep our eyes fixed on that ideal state if we are to understand original sin. Nothing shows more clearly what a high opinion our masters had of the spiri-



tuality of the human soul than their teaching on original sin.

The temptation to make original sin consist in the woes and limitations of human nature is obvious. Yet our masters never yielded to the temptation, and always looked for the stain of original sin in that region of the soul which so to speak is accessible to God alone. I feel confident that I am not saying an exaggerated thing when I affirm, that original sin presupposes such an idea of God and of the human soul as is not found outside the Catholic Church. To deny the existence of original sin, on scientific or humanitarian grounds, is mere intrusion into the sanctuary of theology on the part of experimental science.

It is the characteristic of Catholic theology that, whilst lifting the spiritual facts far above the region of sentimentality and imagination, far above the working of the senses, it still safeguards their intense reality. So in the case of original sin. It is a great evil, an evil for ever to be bewailed, yet flesh and blood have little to do with it.

The reason why some find it so difficult to give original sin its proper place in their philosophy of the human soul, is this: they do not grasp how the

most important section of the soul's life is for God directly and exclusively; and original sin has to be sought for in this high region where God and the soul are to meet.

When God created man, He put into the human soul a gift, called technically the gift of original justice. By means of that gift whose psychological supernatural value could not be overstated, the human will was perfect. The human will through that gift, and as long as the gift was in the soul, was adjusted in such a wise, that God Himself could not discover anything in it that was not for God. Now it is the loss of that extraordinary gift that constitutes original sin. All other losses do not constitute original sin; they are mere results of original sin; even if they had not been inflicted on the soul, there still could be original sin; as on the other hand, all these losses may be in the soul and yet original sin has been taken away through the restitution of that wonderful gift. Such is the case of the baptised soul in the state of grace.

That gift of original justice, for such is its technical name, whatever it was, made the human will perfectly subordinate to the will of God, established

it in perfect harmony with God; the loss of it brought about a falling back of the soul into itself, which need not be a positive rebellion against God, yet which, by comparison with that adhesion of the will to God, looks like rebellion. For we must remember what we said at the beginning, that in the study of original sin we must go by comparison. The human soul now begins its career without this gift, and this is original sin. It is a privation, because God meant the soul to have this gift. It is in a state of enmity to God (again by comparison), because without this gift the human will cannot rise above itself with an unselfish preference for God.

The absence of this gift is truly called a sin, because the absence is owing to the free act of a human will, the will of Adam. That St. Thomas should consider the absence of that gift, in the individual soul, what he calls the formal part of original sin, is a clear evidence of his immaterialistic view, concerning original sin. The term formal, with the schoolmen, as we know, is what we might call in English essential, the part that matters and decides.

Death of the body, the flesh that wars against the spirit, and the spirit that wars against the flesh,

the infirmity of the will-power, and the ignorance of the mind, that make temptation so dangerous, all that dismal condition of human nature bewailed so eloquently by St. Paul and St. Augustine, are not original sin. They constitute the fall; for we know, that baptism which destroys original sin, does not alter the sad conditions of our nature. It is certainly a remarkable fact that St. Thomas and his disciples should have given to original sin that exclusive meaning, apparently so abstruse and so lofty, when the belief in original sin fills the writings of the Fathers with an unceasing wail. It may be admitted, of course, that the Fathers do not always distinguish between original sin and the fallen state, yet the distinction is of paramount importance.

The statement bears repetition; that is to say: Baptism is the end of original sin, and yet it is not the end of the fallen condition of man. What I might call the subtlety of it, is simply another proof that in this matter the only safe rules are the rules of spirits.

The question might be asked here, how the human soul could possibly be said to be in a state of even comparative opposition to God, through the lack of the gift of original justice.



The soul comes directly from the hands of God as a pure spirit. Why then should it be considered less directly pointed towards God, simply because it lacks that higher directness that comes through the gift of original justice?

The answer is to be found in our chapter on the soul's Unconsciousness, where we said that in the present union between soul and body, the soul's activities are taken up entirely in animating the body. It is, through the laws of nature, a pouring out of the soul over matter (for such is the expression of St. Thomas), that brings with it a comparative inability to rise to God, directly, totally, with all its strength, and it was the office of the gift of original justice to remedy that necessary sinking of the spirit towards matter.

Here we come by a natural sequel to the mode of transmission of original sin. It took the masters in the Divine Science a long time before this mode of transmission could be stated clearly, without any materialistic appendages. To make of natural heredity the transmitter of the original stain was found to be one of the theological exaggerations in that matter.

Heredity in this case, as St. Thomas points out so shrewdly, so far from causing a moral stain, does away with it, because whatever comes through heredity does not belong to the moral order, but to the natural order.

What we want in order to explain original sin, is the depravity, at least comparative, of the spirit-will in man; for there alone could be the stain of sin. Now the spirit part of man does not fall under heredity. The mode of transmission then which alone is recognised by St. Thomas and Catholic theology generally is simply the fact of one human being coming from another human being through the laws of generation, or more simply the fact of our being the children, through successive generations, of Adam. In this matter of original sin, what might be called the concupiscence-side in the transmission of the human individuality, need not be considered at all. A child would have original sin even if the parents by an impossible fiction were entirely exempt from the laws of concupiscence. This supposition comes from St. Thomas himself. The union between the spirit that comes from the hands of God and which we call the soul, and the human organism, that comes

from the parents, is the only physical cause that makes original sin.

We ought not to look for a kind of spiritual virus in that human organism, that will poison the soul. The gift that is to be the compensating power between the two elements, soul and body, is not given when the union takes place, solely because it was lost to the race through the act of the father of the race.

We will of course read in the writings of Fathers and preachers strong expressions that point to a kind of spiritual infection, a deadly spiritual poison that kills the soul, when it is united with the body. It is of course metaphorical language, which is not exaggeration; for the soul to be without that gift that would raise it above the body, in the body, is a great loss. A gift of that kind would indeed be a gratuitous bestowal, yet at the same time one that, from its extreme usefulness, might almost be called one of nature's necessities (Chapter 4).

The lamentations of the preacher over the sad unregenerated soul are as fully justified as most of the lamentations and wailings of the children of men, with whom misfortune is mostly misfortune by comparison. They are not as happy as they have

been, or would like to be, and, therefore, they are most unhappy.

Perhaps some of my readers will have seen a difficulty in the exposition of these views, the discovery of which would do credit to their theological insight. Original sin, we have said, is that most spirit-like disorder of the will, which is remedied at Baptism through Sanctifying Grace. And original sin is entirely destroyed through Sanctifying Grace whenever it comes. Now Sanctifying Grace may be lost again, as we all know. Does then original sin come back? This is the difficulty.

Original sin does not come back, and this for two reasons. First, if God gives Sanctifying Grace to the human soul, through that very act He has severed the soul from that solidarity that made it share the condition of fallen mankind. Sanctifying Grace possessed even once has raised the soul to the family of God. If the soul loses it again, it is a rebellious member in the family of God; it does not fall back into a merely common membership with the human family.

In the second place, original sin, from all that has preceded, is evidently a state, that as far as the individual is concerned, is not of his own doing.



Not to be of his doing is an essential feature in it. When a man loses Sanctifying Grace, he loses it through his own doing, and his state is not original sin, but actual mortal sin, which of course is infinitely more disastrous.

Two more remarks remain to be made. What is the precise relation of all that active disorder in the human faculties called concupiscence to original sin? We have seen how it remains, when original sin has been taken away; St. Thomas calls it the material part of original sin, whilst that higher spiritual harm is the formal part. In Scholastic language material is, to formal, a kind of result, a secondary view of it, of indifferent moral value. They are not sin, they are not a moral depravity, in themselves, they are mere infirmities. They are wounds, not indeed of the soul but of the body. They are called in theology the wounds of human nature, owing to original sin. Cajetan has a wise remark. He says that we know them to be wounds, not through observation, but through Faith. His meaning is this, that a being such as man, from his very nature, is prone to the things that are not of the spirit; he must die by the laws of his nature. There once was in man

a state of gratuitous psychological perfection in which those natural necessities had been suspended. That there ever was a state so high that to fall from it back to the original level is like being stripped and wounded, is exclusively a matter of Faith. Once more, the wounding, as everything else in original sin, is to be taken comparatively; there is a declaration of the Holy Office that it is erroneous for a theologian to maintain, that God would have been unjust in creating man, such as man is now.

The second remark I think opportune, before ending, has reference to the well known power of the evil spirit over the unregenerate soul. It must be a great reality; we need only open the ritual of Baptism; there the casting out of the evil presence holds such a conspicuous place. This evil presence founded on original sin seems to be in conflict with the main idea of this thesis, that everything in original sin is to be understood comparatively. The evil presence, or the power of the evil spirit over the unregenerated soul, seems to be an absolute evil, not only a comparative one. This, however, does not seem to belong to original sin, but seems to belong to the fallen state.

Just as what we called the material part of original sin, and perhaps more than anything else, Satan's principality over the earth, was established through the personal act of Adam. That the spirit of rebellion had taken up his abode on the earth is evident from the Scriptures. The Supernatural, or in other words Sanctifying Grace, is the only barrier that could possibly be opposed to him, and the absence of the supernatural, either wilful or inborn, is a presence at least possible if not active of the evil spirit (Chapter 52).

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### The Fall and how it differs from Original Sin.

On the subject of man's present condition, we have to proceed cautiously, in order to avoid compromising sacred doctrine. There is, at the outset, a most important distinction to be drawn between original sin and the fallen state. The importance of this distinction will appear after a moment's consideration.

Original sin is wiped away in Baptism, yet after Baptism, as before, we are still a fallen race. The

Fall is remedied not in this life, but in the resurrection of all flesh. Original sin, on the contrary, is entirely destroyed through the possession of Sanctifying Grace.

Again, the present state of mankind shows endless varieties of decadence and retrogression, which may all be traced back to an historical origin. Science and observation can explain them without any theology. Thus the dwarfishness of mind and body in the inhabitant of the arctic regions can easily be explained climatically. It would be most unwise of a theologian to appeal to the various instances of degeneracy, we notice in mankind, for evidence in support of the dogma of the original fall; for those retrogressions are processes of history; they are not part of revealed doctrine; they establish indeed the fact, that we are an imperfect race, but they can never establish the theological doctrine of the original fall.

Mankind might be a thousand times more perfect than it is. In fact, all the *Utopias* of the idealistic dreamer about the perfectibility of mankind might be fulfilled; we might be found to be a perfect race, philosophically, and yet the Fall, of which theology speaks, would be as great and as real as ever.



Endless perfectibility of mankind is not a theory at which a theologian, with his dogma of the original fall, need look askance. Any amount of perfectibility, realised in practice, is no healing up of that wound, which is our fall in Adam.

We may, if we like, think of our first parents, after they left the garden of innocence and delight, as of beings full of every perfection. Most likely their existence would have been more than the golden age of poets. Instances of degeneracy in the past and hopes of future perfection are alike foreign to the dogma of the Fall. We may hold them on their own merits.

The fall of Adam, and for the matter of that, our own fallen state, circumscribed to the limits of theology, is a thing no one can deny on scientific grounds, because the Fall is the loss of a state entirely supernatural, entirely gratuitous, entirely miraculous.

The moment there is a possibility, in the human breast, of feeling the stings of an evil inclination, man, in theology, is a fallen being. Even if the evil inclination were not followed by consent, it would still be a clear indication of the Fall. The perfection of Adam was this: not to be able to have

any discrepancies in mind or heart, between eternal truth, eternal beauty, and his own aims. To begin to feel those discrepancies is already the deepest fall.

Theology and Faith go not beyond this. This is the Fall they know of; and if man has fallen lower still, it is the historian's part, to explain it and to bewail it.

We might say indeed, that all the evils of the world are the result of Adam's fall; but they are not *the* Fall. The Fall would have been just as real, even if by a special Providence of Divine Omnipotence those results had not taken place.

Biology, evolution, even psychology, cannot be pressed by the theologian into service, to prove his dogma, just as they cannot speak against it. For the biologist, to denounce the dogmatic fact of the fall is "to go beyond his last".

Original sin, if possible, dwells in a region still more inaccessible to science and observation. It is, as St. Thomas says, the *supremum hominis*, the highest of man, and that alone, which is, or anyhow can be, the seat of original sin.

I think I may safely assert, that most non-Catholics would hardly grant the possibility of such supernatural elevation of human nature, as is implied in original sin, by way of contraries.

Original justice means this: that by a most special dispensation of God, by a working hardly less astounding than transubstantiation, every human being who receives life from another human being, should receive it in such a way, as to be radically and intrinsically fit for the Blessed Vision of God; that the mysteries of heredity, already so great, should have been rendered more mysterious, through man having eternal life, i. e. Sanctifying Grace, by heredity. For such would have been the condition of mankind without original sin.

Sanctifying Grace was to be, in the happy expression of St. Thomas, the grace of the race, instead of being a grace of only particular individuals. The possibility of such a grace is a greater difficulty, than its absence; for we must bear well in mind that original sin, contrary to the teaching of the reformers, leaves man all his powers, to acquire special grace, through his own personal acts, under the influence of the Holy Spirit. All that the dogma of the Fall prohibits us from saying is this: that man has grace through heredity, instead of through personal effort. Possession of Sanctifying Grace requires the free use of our faculties, requires age and responsibility. The original privilege was

this: to be conceived and born with such grace, as makes the soul fit radically for the Vision of God. Where then is the injustice? Where then is Man's right to grumble at the ways of God? Had we been denied the power of finding grace through our own acts, we might perhaps have thought God rigorous in His ways. Catholic theology is emphatic in leaving those powers to man, though of course those same powers have to be helped again by the grace of God.

In this instance, as in many others, only those have a right to speak of the severity of the ways of God, who are firm believers in the generosity of God's original intentions.

In conclusion, it is not so much Original Sin, and the Fall, that are difficulties; it is the state of original justice and perfection that would seem fabulous, if we had not Faith. To be, through the laws of heredity, immortal in body, divine in soul, without error in the mind, without defect or imperfection of any kind, this is what God meant man to be.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### **The Human Soul and Suffering.**

Sufferings are the daily bread of man here on earth. Possible sufferings in the Hereafter constitute



one of the most vexing, as well as one of the most dreadful problems for man's mind. It is the purpose of the present chapter to give the theological teaching as to the extent and the manner in which the soul, as such, partakes of suffering.

In this matter, more than in any other matter, we have to fall back upon the twofold state of the human soul, the state of union with the body, and the disembodied state; for the soul's position, with regard to suffering, is exactly reversed, as either the one or the other state prevails.

It must be taken as a universal truth that there is no suffering in the real sense of the word, for the human soul, as long as it is united with the body. For the soul to suffer, now, whilst it animates the body, would be as great a miracle as if the soul had direct and experimental knowledge of its own existence.

I do not deny the possibility of such a miracle; perhaps soul-sufferings properly so called, took place occasionally in the lives of some of the great mystical saints, though it would be a difficult task to bring forward evidences to that effect from their own disclosures of the secrets of their hearts. Even the mental agonies more bitter than death

of which there are a few authentic instances, may be explained without having recourse to direct soul-sufferings.

Soul-sufferings, as the term implies, are sufferings in which the spirit, called soul, suffers directly as spirit, in himself, in one of his purely spiritual powers.

Such sufferings do not take place here on earth. All our sufferings are either bodily pains, or sorrows that have their seat in the higher senses. Even when we are checked in the most spirit-like part of ourselves, in our free will, the annoyance that may be consequent upon it, is felt not in the free will, but in a lower, in a sensitive section of our being. The spirit-will of man either acts, or stops from acting; but it cannot suffer.

Catholic theologians have done the human mind the greatest service by showing how suffering does not reach what is man's best and serenest region, his real spirit-faculties. Catholic theology is a most sympathetic theology, because it believes fully in the objective reality of suffering; it never treats suffering as an illusion; it makes it, on the contrary, one of the most powerful levers for sanctity, owing to the intense reality of suffering.

On the other hand, Catholic theology is not overwhelmed by the terrible phenomena of suffering. It views them merely as the clouds that hang on the sides of the mountain; the real summit of the human personality soars above them.

St. Thomas Aquinas gives this matter of the soul's sufferings and passions the attention and the prominence it deserves, in question 26 *De veritate*. Nothing could surpass the lucidity of his views on the subject, coupled as they are with a most profound analysis of the sources of suffering. He speaks of the sense of pain very much like a modern physiologist; he makes the highest appetitive senses the chief, and in fact the only organs of soul-sufferings. Soul-sufferings, *passiones animales*, are, in the language of St. Thomas, those depressing and painful states of the higher appetitive senses that come from the intellectual perception of an unpleasant thing. Thus, for instance, I may be thwarted in a cherished scheme; my mind, and my free will perceive this check put upon my activities. But mind and will are not the sufferers; the sadness will be in the highest appetitive power of the sense-part of my being.

This is, so to speak, the nearest approach to real soul-suffering; in this instance, an intellectual

act, or disposition, establishes the highest appetitive power of the sense-region in a state of experimental sadness. In this, and in no other sense, may we say that our souls suffer. The greatest sufferings, such as Christ's agony in the garden, are to be explained in that way. No intellectual act, no volitive act, of the purely spiritual sort, can be suffering, though they may be apprehensions of what is most unpleasant. The sensitive powers that come next do all the suffering.

Pain and sorrow are the attributes of sensitive, organic powers only; pain and sorrow may be the results of purely intellectual, purely immaterial considerations and dispositions; but they are a result that is not within, but without the immaterial, the intellectual region.

A pure spirit is as superior to pain and sorrow as he is to sensation itself; in other words, pain and sorrow are against the laws of spirit-life.

Such statements will surprise, at first sight, when we remember our belief in Hell and Purgatory. Yet the views expressed here are merely the most direct conclusions of the doctrine on the nature of spirit-substances, besides being the constant teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas.



My chapter on spirit-penalty will, I hope, set at rest any alarm an orthodox mind might experience at the conclusions of Scholastic philosophy. For the present, any one with a logical mind will see at a glance the reasonableness, as well as the wisdom of the Scholastic view on pain and sorrow, making them into exclusively bodily phenomena.

There is a way, however, in which St. Thomas would grant that the soul, as such, suffers; it only needs a mention, as it confirms all we have said.

Bodily suffering interferes with the higher operations of the soul, or even brings about the separation between soul and body, which separation, as we say elsewhere, is a loss to the soul. Illness, for instance, hampers pure intellectual speculation; pain distracts the most powerful mind from the contemplation of higher things.

Such results, however, could not be called sufferings in the soul, or of the soul. They are merely negative results, consisting in transitory suspensions of certain soul-activities, according to principles laid down elsewhere, principles according to which purely intellectual operations cannot be performed without the cooperation of sensitive organs.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

**Law and Prayer.**

We come now to a part of our subject whose treatment requires a constant appeal to the idea of law both in the physical and moral Universe; I shall therefore preface the remaining portion of my book with this chapter on law.

We read a good deal about the 'ways' of God, in the Sacred Scriptures. There is no reason why we should not also speak of the 'character' of God. Character is an unchanging feature even with man. It comes out everywhere, shows itself in the details of life as well as in the greater undertakings. With man, character is his way of acting. So, with God, there is a way of acting, of doing, that is characteristic of Him, and as far as our observation of the doings of God goes, we never discover a departure from that characteristic way of His.

The doings, the works of which we can say with absolute certainty that they are God's directly, are first and foremost the great workings and laws of physical Nature. Through reason and faith, we know those marvels to be the direct effect of God's creative act, to be directly under His control. They

are not only the invention of His infinitely wise Intellect, the fiat of His Omnipotence, but they are also the free choice of His free Will. For who would dare to say that He could not have made Nature different from what it is? I do not maintain for a moment that there is no such thing as an inherent property, in the things of Nature, belonging to the very idea, the very essence of it, as the schoolmen would say. Matter, for instance, seems hardly conceivable without the three dimensions; God could not think of matter without reference to the three dimensions; thus speak our masters. But where the free act of God comes in, is the arranging, the combining, the juxtaposition and subordination of the things which His wisdom has thought out, so as to make a world of His own choice. With the same materials, He could have made a different world.

That the Universe, as it is now, bears not only the mark of an intelligent cause, but also a free will-cause, is a matter of Catholic faith.

And here we see the rôle of 'Character' in God. Being free, in the arranging, in the planning of the physical world, He has invariably adopted one mode, one way, one style: permanence, unchangeableness.

Modern science has done theology a very great service in demonstrating those characteristics in all the works of God. With modern science, those features of Nature's doings have almost become a fetich. It calls them the laws of the Universe, and easily makes them into a kind of self-subsisting Power that rules the Universe itself with an iron hand. The laws of Nature are the gods, the demiurgic deities of modern science. It even fails to see God in Nature, precisely because the laws of Nature account for everything. It is the case of the child, that being taken to see the town of its native district for the first time in its life, could not see it, owing to so many houses standing in the way of its being seen.

Those very laws are the will of God, and are, moreover, a clear expression of the Legislator's character. Nature resembles its Maker. Faint though the resemblance may be, it is a true one.

The same characteristics are found in another order of things, in the moral order, both from the individual, and the social point of view.

To be under the law is to be benefitted by it; to be outside the law is to be deprived of its



blessings; to be in opposition to the law, is to be outside happiness. As sin is a disordered act, it is evident that whosoever sins, acts against some kind of order; and therefore it is but fair that he should be thwarted (*deprimatur*) by that very order, which thwarting is pain indeed (*Summa* I, 2, question 87, art. 1).

Firm belief in the operation of laws, both in the physical and spiritual order, is compatible in the mind of the theologian with his belief in prayer; for prayer far from interfering with laws, is one of the great laws of the human soul. Through prayer the human soul rises to a height of spiritual perfection which it could not attain otherwise. By prayer we mean the prayer of supplication, the cry to God that God in His Omnipotence may do what it is not possible for human nature to do. Such an attitude on the part of man is a moral perfection second to none in its excellency; through it the human will is made to trust God, a most difficult thing for a created spirit to do owing to the distance that separates him from God. Not to pray is not to observe a law, because the law is that certain things should not be granted except to prayer.

The rôle of prayer has puzzled many a mind. Most modern explanations of prayer, outside the sphere of Catholic thought, are tainted with Pantheism; prayer is considered as an effort of the partially Divine to unite with the wholly Divine. Christian prayer, on the contrary, supposes all along two extremes, infinitely distant, God and the creature. When prayer is heard the infinitely rich has not assimilated the infinitely poor, but He has made him less poor, perhaps even He has made him rich. But if we cannot understand what it is to trust God, our efforts to explain prayer will land us sooner or later in Pantheistic theories. Trust, even most absolute and unlimited trust, implies duality of persons. It is a difficult thing amongst men, and it is not less difficult between man and God. But where it is found, there is union far more refreshing than the assimilation dreamed of by the Pantheist. This is why I said that prayer is one of the great laws of the human soul; nothing could take its place in the soul, and the soul without prayer is outside one of the loveliest planes of moral perfection, the plane where human trust and Divine liberality meet.

## CHAPTER XXX.

**Permanence of the Spirit-Will.**

Catholic theology is the theology of the unchanging laws of God. Catholic theology makes it its task to find out these laws, and to state them; above all, it is a firm believer in their 'unchangeableness'.

We come now to another of these great laws, the law of the spirit-will. It has been formulated by St. Thomas, and has been made one of the corner-stones of his philosophy.

Man, here on earth, says the great Doctor, has a most changeable will. Supposing him to be in a normal condition, he is absolutely free to select his course; he chooses one thing out of many things and his choice is not necessitated with regard to any particular object. Before he makes his choice, the various objects that may allure, or entice his will, are such that none of them is capable of fixing the will's choice, through an irresistible preponderance of attractiveness.

The choice once made, the will's freedom remains. Man may go back upon his decision, upon the selection he has made, at once; he may regret

his choice the moment he has formulated it to himself.

The will of man, here on earth, is changeable both before and after the selection.

The spirit's will, on the contrary, is mutable or changeable with regard to any object before he makes the selection; he may do the thing, or not do it; he may choose one kind of finite advantage in preference to another kind of finite advantage. But after having made his selection, the spirit cannot retract, cannot change, cannot regret. His selection has become a fixed, unchanging state of will.

Such, in a few words, is the great law of the spirit-will. St. Thomas, who states it hundreds of times in his works, never seems to entertain the slightest doubts as to its validity.

The law is simply one of the characteristics of a purely spiritual substance. It must therefore hold good for the disembodied human soul, as well as for the higher spirits, commonly called angels.

Like all the great laws of God, it is a two-edged sword; it works for weal and for woe, with equal efficacy. Like all other laws, it is intended for



happiness; its purpose is the purpose of all work and all effort, permanence. Through it, the spirit that selects sanctity will be a saint, eternally and unchangeably, without possibility of regret or retractation. It points to a marvellous power of decision; it is what we ought to expect from beings of such high perfection. The thought that such a power may be used for woe, that it may become eternal fixedness in an evil course, is indeed an overwhelming thought. But it is vastly less difficult to grasp, than the thought, that for the mighty spirit the selection of what is Divine, should be merely a transitory habit of will, to give way any moment to a diametrically opposite habit. Eternal fixedness in sanctity, for a spirit, is what we expect from him; eternal fixedness in evil is a possibility easily reconcilable with a spirit-nature. But an everlasting swinging backward and forward between good and evil is entirely incompatible with the immensity and the vigour of a spirit-will.

We ought to remember that a law of that kind is absolutely indispensable to our peace of mind, to our higher hope; in fact, all men with higher aspirations implicitly believe in a law of that kind, for all men with higher aspirations believe in some

sort of impeccability, for their future state; do we not, all of us, think of the happy and holy life we expect, as of a permanent state, from which the greatest element of instability is excluded, the instability of our will? If the will were not made proof against change and sin, how could there be a genuine hope of everlasting happiness? The first thing to believe in, is it not precisely this, that we shall be so tuned in our wills, that they will not rebel any more?

Scholastic theology, far from pressing a new, far-fetched and abstruse concept on men's mind, is at one with the highest instinct of mankind, in the formulating of this marvellous law.

What Scholastic theology did is this: it first gave the psychological explanation of this wonderful permanence of will, believed in by mankind. Then it had the boldness, or rather the common-sense, to apply the law to good and evil alike.

If the human will, or spirit-will generally, is ever to be permanently good, permanently holy, that permanency ought to be found in the depths of the spirit-will itself.

To make the law operative for good only, and not also for evil, would imply a most incompre-

hensible suspension of an immanent, vital spirit-law, which would be tantamount to the destruction of the spirit.

After stating the law, let us come to its psychological explanation; though I should like to warn the reader, that the explanation came after the belief in the law, and is therefore of less importance than the belief in the law itself.

The following then is the psychological explanation given by St. Thomas: A spirit apprehends all that he apprehends, fully, completely, directly, without any reasoning, without any tentative process; he grasps intellectually the thing in its entirety, at the first glance. Therefore whatever he judges to be for himself the best thing, his judgment is irreformable, because he has judged with full knowledge of the subject. But not only has he apprehended the thing, at a glance, but also all the things connected with it, its side-issues and consequences. Therefore his decision is irreversible not through lack of knowledge, as may be the case with man, but through very completeness of knowledge.

It is no doubt an arduous concept for us, who, according to the Scriptures, never remain in the

same state. How can we think of an eternally irreversible decision of a mind, about what is best for itself? Yet it ought to be easy for any one to understand how—there being nothing new, simply because everything there was to be had, was there—the judgment cannot alter.

Now, will always follows the state of the mind. If the mind's decisions are irreformable, the decisions of the will are irreformable too; and this is obviously not against the will's freedom, for in every case the will always follows what may be called the last pronouncement of reason. If the will changes, it is simply because reason has found new motives for change.

This then is, in a few words, the great Thomistic doctrine about permanence in good and evil. It receives additional strength and clearness from a comparison, which St. Thomas makes frequently, between man in the present state and the spirit.

St. Thomas enumerates the circumstances that make man come back from resolutions which, at the time they are taken, seem to be final.

First, man is committed to an evil course, through the evil instincts of the lower passions and cravings; or through temporary and transitory allurements



which are the temptations of the moment. Now all these things are certain dispositions of our senses, which may change and do change. Illness, for instance, has been to many a man a moral remedy, and he began to hate sin, in its fruits. Then again, as all our knowledge is progressive and successive, new considerations may strike our mind, or old ones may strike it at a new angle.

All this is not only a sufficient but also an infallible cause of change.

Or again, forgetfulness, distance, have ended many a man's temptations. In all our conversions, the one or the other of these elements is the total human cause of them.

Many times they are all at work together; Divine Grace, without which there is not real conversion, could not enter the soul without them, at least in the ordinary course of God's Providence. Now, it is evident that nothing of the kind could be found in a spirit; his nature is most simple, and his intellect is most comprehensive.

I said that we ought to find the causes of the spirit's perseverance in good, in himself, and not bring in God's miraculous action to explain it. For it would indeed be the greatest of all divine

interventions, if a spirit, absolutely unstable in his will, were made by God eternally stable. No doubt, it is not beyond God's omnipotence to do this, and yet leave to the spirit his own vital freedom; but this would be one eternal, never-ending miracle.

There is, in Catholic doctrine, one glorious source of eternal perseverance in sanctity: the clear Vision of God in Heaven. To see God clearly, as He is in Himself, necessarily makes a spirit impeccable. But this specific cause of impeccability need not be taken into account, in our philosophy of spirits. The Vision of God is something far too supernatural, to be made the ordinary cause of impeccability.

The condition of the human soul in that state of transition, called Purgatory, makes it imperative, even from the point of view of Catholic dogma, to think of another mode of impeccability, than the one of Beatific Vision. For the human spirit, in that intermediate state, is deprived of the Vision of God; yet he is in a state where sin has become an absolute impossibility.

The soul in Purgatory is fixed eternally in sanctity, because, at the moment of separation

between soul and body, in other words, at the moment the human soul enters upon the spirit-state, it has its will fixed in God, through the charity that was in it, before death.

The human soul makes its great choice the moment it enters into the full spirit-state. How this choice depends necessarily and infallibly on the state of man's conscience at the moment of death, will be explained in our next chapter.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

### The Psychology of Consequences.

Catholic philosophy, more than any other philosophy, deserves the name of „Philosophy of consequences". Man is the slave of his own deeds; the stress which our philosophy lays on freedom, makes it clear that, when one deals with Catholic principles, one has to be ready to find human responsibility to be the law of this world and of the next. Hell may be an uncouth term in the ears of our degenerate civilisation; but what is hell, if not human responsibility, a free result of a free will. God has left man in the hands of his own counsel to an extent we can hardly realise.

Catholic psychology, being a branch of Catholic philosophy, is, like the philosophy itself, essentially a psychology of consequences; the soul makes and mars itself, through its own act. This is what we mean in theology by the expression *macula peccati*, the stain of sin. It is simply this: when sin, or at least mortal sin, is committed, the soul is stained, or warped in the innermost and spirit-like part of itself; and so deep is that spirit-stain, that nothing short of the supernatural grace of God can wipe it out.

Man may forget the act that stained his soul; he may even regret his act; but as long as the regret is merely a human regret, based on human motives, the stain remains. If the regret were based on higher and spiritual motives, the supernatural grace of God would necessarily come along with it, and heal the spirit's wounded powers.

It may be said therefore universally that man left to himself cannot right himself spiritually.

The innermost part of his soul is made unfit for God, through the act of sin.

When we say therefore that the human soul, at its separation from the body, chooses eternally and irrevocably either good or evil, we mean this:



before death, before the separation, the soul was actually in charity with God, or actually outside God's charity, owing to a mortal sin; the choice is really made; but the simple transition from union with the body into the spirit-state, makes the soul's condition an unalterably fixed one.

In the case of the sinful soul, the choice of evil is simply its incapacity of choosing God, which incapacity comes from that free warping of the will, which took place when mortal sin was committed.

As reprobation is essentially the loss of God, we cannot be surprised to hear that the guilty soul chooses evil; for its evil is the very act by which it turns away from God.

St. Thomas frequently uses the metaphor of a man throwing himself wilfully into a pit; he only can be helped out by extraneous assistance. Mortal sin is an act by which the soul falls away from God, back on itself.

There is therefore a continuation of sin between the present life and the future life, not in the act of sinning, but in the state of the soul. As a matter of fact, that terrible collapse of the body, called death, makes continuation in the *act* of sinning an impossibility. We cannot sin in the next life as we

do sin now, simply because the next life is so totally different from the present life; but there is the continuation of the consequences of the sin in the most spirit-like region of the soul. The soul of the sinner is thrown on the shores of eternity, a halting, benumbed, broken spirit, and it begins its new life in accordance with these disastrous conditions.

All we know of Nature's workings points that way. Nature is terrible in its consequences. If the human spirit, after doing evil and not repenting, or, more clearly still, after rising against God, and not humbling itself before God, were restored to perfect spirit-integrity through the simple fact of its being separated from the body, the human spirit would be the only exception to the law of continuity and consequence.

All action partakes of the character of that individual nature from which the action proceeds. As the soul's nature is thus warped, all the actions, all the volitions that proceed from it, share in that warping, when the soul has become a spirit.

We all expect this law of consequences to be operative in our soul for happiness, i. e. we expect that our present efforts at sanctity shall make our

soul holy for eternity. It is illogical not to apply the law, when it is a case of moral warping and of defilement of the will.

Why should a moment's transgression be visited by eternal punishment? Such is the stock objection. But in that way, the objection is misleading; it assumes that wrong-doing cannot be punished otherwise than by an outside avenger. It assumes that the voluntary warping of the free will, called sin, could not interfere with man's everlasting happiness, unless God rose in anger, to stop the happy mood of the unrighteous spirit, to change it into sadness and weeping.

But it is here precisely where Catholic theology parts company with superficial thought, and where it is at one with the deepest laws of Nature. Everywhere in Nature, we find the law of consequences. A thing once spoilt, is spoilt for ever. The destruction may have taken but a moment; but its results are everlasting. If, as a child, I had played with firearms, against the injunction of my parent, and had lost both my eyes through my disobedience, the silly act would have lifelong punishment. I should sit in darkness for ever, for a moment's thoughtlessness.

A man may gamble away his family estate in one night; it means penury to his kindred for centuries.

All we know of Nature points to the universality of the law of consequences. It is said sometimes that the doctrine of everlasting reprobation cannot be true, because Nature always works for happiness, because the final result of Nature's doings must be happiness.

It is certainly strange to find that our great theologians make use of that very idea in their defence of the dogma of eternal reprobation.

It is perfectly true that Nature works for ultimate happiness. But in order to do that, it must punish every violation of its own laws. Nature is good and kind, the mother of happiness. But individual breakings of Nature's laws invariably produce catastrophe.

Is there a law that does more for us all than the law of Universal Gravitation? Yet, if I laugh at Nature's intentions, and throw myself from a high window, that very law is my destruction. Now the moral, the spiritual world has its laws too.

But, you will say, there must be a difference in the application of the law of consequences as it refers to spiritual or material things, as the results differ so much in duration; one result is temporal, the other is eternal.



There is indeed a radical difference, and it is this:

Temporal losses may not be through one's fault, may be caused by mere incapacity; yet Nature is unsparing. Spiritual losses cannot but be the act of deliberate free will, and of clear knowledge. There is no sin there, where there is not deliberate will to transgress the law, with the power not to transgress it. There is no sin in us through the act of another man, such sin I mean as entails eternal unhappiness. There is no mortal sin in the ignorant, through the very fact of ignorance; there is no mortal sin in the man blinded by passion, through the very fact of this blindness. Mortal sin is the cool, deliberate choice of an evil course.

Visible, bodily Nature might indeed be accused of injustice; not so spiritual Nature.

We forget another very important fact, besides the one just enunciated.

Nature admits of no repentance. What folly destroys, remains destroyed.

In the spiritual plane of things, the soul, warped by mortal sin, is forgiven over and over again, during our mortal life; the soul, dead from the point of view of God, is restored to life by miraculous grace, whilst we are in the body.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

**The Dogma of Eternal Loss and its  
Theological Reasons.**

It is an integral part of Catholic belief that eternal reprobation awaits the human spirit that enters, through death, upon the permanent spirit-state, if the spirit's will be warped through mortal sin up to the very last moment of its union with the bodily organism.

That such a fate will befall the human spirit thus circumstanced is part of God's revelation to His Church. But there is no revelation as to the intrinsic reason of such an ordinance. In other words, the fact of reprobation for the soul that departs in mortal sin is a Catholic truth; but there is no explanation of this tremendous truth that may be called a Catholic explanation, an explanation having as much authority as the truth it explains.

One thing, however, is certain, and in fact, it is part of the main belief, in this matter: Eternal reprobation is a result of mortal sin. Mortal sin is the only and total cause of reprobation; no new and unforeseen agency of evil steps is to make the soul's lot so desperate. This distinction is of

importance and in order to make it clear, I submit a comparison.

A soldier in battle may receive a bullet in his leg, to prevent his moving freely. Owing to his inability to walk he is found and killed by a savage enemy, later on. The wounded leg was not his death, but in a certain manner it was the cause of his death. Now, it would be most uncatholic to consider mortal sin as a mere wound, that prevents the soul from escaping some terrible powers of evil, in the next world, as if the soul could possibly escape final ruination, but for the powers of evil, only too ready to profit by its infirmity for their own wicked designs. Mortal sin, and mortal sin alone, is the total and direct cause of the soul's spiritual and irremediable death.

But how mortal sin works out that great and everlasting ruination, is not so certain.

The Church is indefatigable in saying that the Justice of God exacts eternal punishment for mortal sin. At first sight, it would seem that we have in the expression 'Justice of God' the Catholic and official explanation of reprobation and its eternity.

The expression however 'Justice of God' is far too comprehensive to be the solution of so delicate

and so recondite a problem. We say, for instance, that God's Goodness makes man eternally happy. The term 'goodness' in this proposition, though perfectly apposite and appropriate, is far from being the ultimate and precise theological explanation of the manner in which man is made happy. We know that man is made eternally happy through the possession of certain supernatural gifts. These supernatural gifts are the real explanation of how man is to be made eternally happy. God's Justice or rather the term 'Justice of God' stands in the same relation to reprobation in which the term 'Goodness of God' stands to eternal happiness. We are still at liberty to give the proximate and direct causes of reprobation. The theological expression 'Justice of God' has many meanings. It is in fact the opposite or counterpart of the expression 'Goodness of God'. But it also has a significance all its own, and narrowed down to the strictest meaning it stands for those acts of God in which He intervenes as Judge, directly, and as it were, personally, rewarding and punishing certain definite acts of free will in His creature. God in that case is supposed to proceed by individual pronouncements; and whatever befalls the creature for weal or for



woe, is the result not so much of universal laws as of the verdict given there and then by the Just Judge. It is God sitting in judgment over His creatures.

No Christian could deny to God the rôle of Judge, and much of Catholic theology, as for instance Purgatory, would not be comprehensible without such direct and free pronouncements on the part of God as to the amount of satisfaction due to offences. But what I want to make clear now is this: Is a pronouncement of that kind the direct and effective cause of reprobation? In other words, though we all have to admit that reprobation comes from God's Justice, taken in its most generic and broad meaning, have we to admit too that reprobation is the result of God's Justice taken in the exclusive and specific meaning of a direct pronouncement, based, as it were, on well weighed points of equity? My answer is that we need not consider such an explanation as being more than a hypothesis. It is no part of the Catholic dogma of reprobation. It has been advanced by more than one theologian, chiefly in modern times, but it is no part of the theology of St. Thomas.

Reprobation is reprobation through the fact of its being an everlasting state; misery, however pro-

found, if not everlasting, would not be reprobation. A reprobate is one who is cast away for ever. Now if anything is clear in the theology of St. Thomas, it is this principle, that eternity of loss is all owing to the psychological state of the soul. In the 82<sup>nd</sup> question of *Prima Secundæ* the great Doctor enters with unmatched subtlety into the results of man's sinful action. Though he says that the eternity of loss is brought about by sin, because sin (meaning mortal sin) is irreparably in opposition to the order of Divine Justice, he affirms at the same time that the soul's depraved condition is the cause of that irreparability of loss. In the 5th article of that question we find this golden axiom: 'Eternity of pain does not correspond to the gravity of the guilt, but it corresponds to the irreparable nature of the guilt'—*Æternitas enim poenæ non respondet quantitati culpæ, sed irreparabilitati ipsius, ut dictum est*. We know from the whole tenor of the theology of St. Thomas, that the soul's guilt is irreparable because through mortal sin grace had been banished from the soul, and had not come back before the soul's departure from the body. The Thomistic explanation of reprobation is to be found not in the direct

pronouncement and act of God, it is to be found in the condition of the human soul irreparably spoiled by sin.

In the same part of his *Summa* St. Thomas speaks of God's intervention through acts of His Justice, taking Justice in its narrow sense; the sixth article of the same question 87 is full of interest, from that point of view; it is the dogmatic explanation of Purgatory. But if anything is clear in the *Summa* of St. Thomas, it is what I might call the *created* cause of reprobation. In that same question the Angelic Doctor denies the statement; that positive infinite suffering is due to mortal sin, and when the objection is made that after all endless suffering is as bad as infinite suffering, his answer is to the effect that its endlessness is not so much a *punishment* as a *condition* of the spirit.

I may be permitted to express what I have said here in a more simple way, so that even a child might understand: In the doctrine of eternal loss God does not threaten us with what He is going to do to us if we despise Him, but He warns us of what is going to happen to us if we leave Him.

In the next chapter I shall endeavour to give more fully the psychological reasons of reprobation. One remark, however, I think it is opportune to make here:

Catholic dogma is very clear concerning the common lot of every reprobate. Whoever dies in mortal sin is separated from God eternally, and becomes a dweller of the mysterious world called Hell. But it is evident that with men there is endless diversity in guilt; one reprobate has sinned vastly more than another reprobate. Both reason and faith tell us that more guilt must be punished more severely. It is however a striking fact that we know very little as to the nature of those additional punishments, and we know still less as to the manner in which the great sinner is made to suffer more than the less guilty soul. I venture to suggest, however, that every additional act of moral depravity has in itself the seeds of its own punishment without a direct intervention of God. There will be presently a chapter on Spirit-penalty where general rules will be laid down, that may guide us in this matter.

It may seem strange at first sight that a less guilty man should be lost as everlastingly as one



who may be a million times more guilty. Objections of that kind bring home to us the wisdom of St. Thomas when he says, as in the passage quoted above, that Eternity of loss has nothing to do with the gravity of the fault, but is a result of the soul's state.

If, on the other hand, we insist on a direct intervention of God in settling the fate of the reprobate, His Justice would of course be responsible for those differences of positive punishment based on the differences of guilt.

If popular imagination has ever run wild in the matter of eternal punishment, all its wildness has been about the individual punishments for different classes of the lost; the common law of reprobation applicable to all the lost has had less attraction for the imagination of mankind — the less we know, the more freely we invent — and the imaginations of men in that particular matter, as much as in every other concern, bear the stamp of the age that gave birth to them.

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

### Reprobation.

It is a part of Catholic belief that the reprobate spirit, either human or angelic, has a will that is

eternally and unchangeably distorted, a will that is incapable intrinsically of repentance, of moral rectitude.

It would be a most uncatholic presentation of the land of the lost, to picture it as peopled with spirits that cry for mercy, and cannot find it. Time for mercy is past, chiefly because the lost spirit does not want mercy.

Utter depravity of will is the feature most conspicuous in everything we know about evil spirits, both from Scripture and tradition. Their misery, or in other words, their punishment, is not greater than their actual moral perversity. Their sufferings, at this moment, are not greater than their sinfulness, not only past, but present.

For every Catholic, there is another point of doctrine, which cannot be doubted. The lost spirits are no longer the objects of Divine Grace. Actual graces are not given them; the lost spirits are left to themselves. Now, without actual graces, as we describe them in Chapter 39, it is intrinsically impossible for the spirit to be restored to moral rectitude.

So we may assert safely that unchangeableness of the will in evil is part of the Catholic dogma on the state of the lost.

But St. Thomas Aquinas goes one step further. He gives us the reason why actual graces are not granted to lost souls.

Actual graces are not granted to lost souls precisely because the lost are psychologically incapable of receiving the touches of divine grace; they have lost that receptiveness which makes grace a congenial help. There is no opening, no door for grace in the will of the fallen spirit.

St. Thomas would say that the perverse spirit receives no grace because his will is intrinsically unchangeable. A less profound theologian would say, on the contrary, that the spirit's will is made unchangeable from not receiving grace.

The Church tolerates both views, provided the fixedness in evil, in the reprobate soul, be adhered to.

St. Thomas looks for the causes of the unchanging reprobation in the will of the creature; other theologians look for them in the Will of God, in the sense that God, in His Justice, is said to refuse graces to those that did not make use of them when they were plentiful.

In other words, St. Thomas makes the state of the created will the principal, or even the unique

cause of the eternity of reprobation. If God is said to inflict an Eternity of reprobation, it is in this sense: God has made spiritual natures so perfect, that a wrong use of their powers will bring about results as permanent as the right use of them.

Other theologians consider the eternity of reprobation as the direct act of God, avenging sin and its offence. St. Thomas knew of this view, and quotes it as a lawful argument to establish the great dogma of the Eternity of reprobation. But whenever St. Thomas speaks his own mind, he adheres to the psychological explanation of this great truth, not to the theological one.

I repeat my remark, that Catholics are free to hold the view they prefer.

For my part, I consider the theories of St. Thomas to be the kindest explanation of the dread mystery. Interpretations of stern spiritual facts, based on spiritual laws, are always kinder and truer than interpretations based on direct acts, emanating from Deity itself.

Eternal reprobation is merely the law, applied with logic, of the permanence of will in the spirits.

St. Thomas never tires of propounding this view, with a simplicity and a sincerity that show that



to him the thing was simply obvious. The fixedness in evil, found in the lost spirit, human or angelic, is technically called *obstinatio*.

Our English term "obstinacy" would hardly do it justice. Obstinacy, in man, comes from narrowness of mind, from an incapacity of changing views, which again is the result of a sterile brain. It is a sign of weakness, not of power.

There is, however, the tenacity of purpose of the strong, unemotional, intellectual man, who is rarely brought back from a design once matured; it is the fruit of strength. It is just a shadow of the great spirit-law, that brings about the *obstinatio*. But even the resolve of a Cæsar is mere weakness, when compared with a spirit-will. Human differences in will-power depend on the perfection of our higher sensitive powers, not on our spiritual condition.

There is one consideration which is not out of place here. When man determines upon a course of action, which he knows to be wrong, sooner or later physical suffering will be his wages. With the pangs of pain, his resolution begins to waver. In him, the power that resolved to do the wrong thing, is different from the power that suffers pain. Pain is something new, something unforeseen.

Not so with the spirit. In him, the power that resolves to act, is also the power that suffers the results of the act; for all his sufferings are spiritual sufferings, will-sufferings. The suffering, whatever may be its nature, is contained in the rebellious act itself. For a spirit, sinfulness and misery are synonymous terms. Punishment could never come to him as a surprise, precisely because he cannot be punished, except in his will-power.

This may be a difficult concept; but it is a perfectly clear one, and its importance cannot be exaggerated. By choosing sin, the spirit chooses its pain.

It will be objected here, that this close connection between sin and its results is clear to a pure spirit; but with the human soul it is hardly accurate to say, that by choosing sin, it chooses the concomitant pain. Is it not on the contrary a favourite commonplace with preachers, to speak of the great surprise that awaits the callous sinner when his soul enters eternity?

The answer, however, is not so difficult as would appear at first sight. The man who commits mortal sin, chooses, through his very act, all the moral results of his sin. He chooses to be in opposition

to the harmony of the World; he chooses shame; he chooses a state of conscience which he would not reveal to a fellow-man, on any condition.

Proportionately speaking, whilst he is here on earth he chooses the evil of sin as much as does the spirit. So to speak, there is the same proportion, in the sinful man and in the sinful spirit, between sin and its results. Now this proportion remains for ever. Through death the human soul becomes a spirit; it passes into a new state. But even in that new state, the proportion between the sinful disposition and the unhappiness of the spirit is the same as it was on earth. The reprobate human spirit will then be as unhappy as it is sinful, neither more nor less.

When I say that by choosing sin we choose the pain of sin, I do not mean that the act of sinning is already the full realization of the sin's bitterness; this is not the case with man, and I do not think it is the case with the spirit. But in every case, to commit sin is to realise clearly, according to the proportions of the nature of the sinner, the possible results of sin, and this is all we want in order to assert that any free-will that chooses sin, chooses likewise the pain of sin.

It is really all a matter of proportion. Say that shame is the penalty of sin; most likely it is the greatest penalty. Proportionately, man is as much ashamed of his sin now as he will be in the spirit-state. It will be greater shame in the spirit-state, but the greater shame comes from the greater state. He will not be surprised at himself, but he will be greater than was his mortal personality, and his shame will be greater. If he did not become greater, he could not have greater shame.

The difficulty is put sometimes in this way: If man knew what his spirit-sufferings will be in the next world, he would never expose himself to those sufferings by committing mortal sin.

People who talk like that seem to be most coolly unconscious of the fact that they postulate an absolute miracle before making the sinner worthy of eternal reprobation. How could man ever realise here on earth what his spirit-sufferings will be in the next? A spirit only can know something about spirit-sufferings; what man realises as keenly now, in his conscience, as he will do it in the spirit-state, speaking proportionately, is this, that through his mortal sin he puts himself in opposition to the World's harmony. The spirit-state is indeed greater



than the mortal state, but freedom and conscience are the same in both states, just as, in another order of things, the charity of the earth is the charity of heaven, because "charity never falleth away".

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

### Spirit-Penalty.

A spirit's permanence in evil is one thing; his penalty is another thing, and of this we speak now.

Dante's vision of Hell may be considered as the most powerful presentment of the fate of reprobate spirits, to which imaginative genius has risen. It is the mightiest metaphor for a thing no eye has seen, nor ear heard. It is the boldest and most successful effort to speak the unspeakable mystery in a voice that will startle the most unimaginative.

Dante's vision is a metaphor on a gigantic scale. But underneath the metaphor there is the *inflammata cortesia ed il discreto Latino di fra Tommaso*: "The wonderful courtesy and the wise Latin of friar Thomas".

St. Thomas soars as high in his intellectual concept of the penalty of the lost spirits, as Dante does in his dramatic presentment of it. If Dante

piles metaphor upon metaphor, St. Thomas is as active in discarding all foreign, all sensitive, all unspiritual elements from the woeful state of the fallen spirit. His language in this matter, more than ever, is *discreto Latino*.

I will give a literal translation of the third article of question sixty-four, in the first part of the *Summa theologica*. The *Summa* is, as we all know, the last work of the great thinker, and contains the ripest fruits of a wisdom more than human.

The question asked is this: *Utrum dolor sit in dæmonibus*: "Whether there be suffering in the demons".

"My answer is this", says the Angelic Doctor. "Fear, suffering, joy, and other such things, as far as they mean passible states (*passiones*), cannot be said to be in the demons. For in that meaning, they belong properly to the sensitive appetite, which is a faculty having its seat in a bodily organism. But as far as those things mean simple acts of will, they may be found in the demons. And in that sense, we are bound to say that there is suffering (*dolor*) in the demons.

"For suffering, as far as it means a simple act of the will, is nothing else than the striving of the

will against either what is, or is not. Now, it is clear that the demons would like many things not to be, which do exist, and many things which do not exist, they would like them to be. For as they are jealous, they would like those that are saved to be lost. Therefore, it is necessary to say, that there is suffering in them. And this is chiefly so because it is in the nature of a punishment, to be repugnant to the will. Moreover, they are deprived of the bliss, for which they have a natural desire; and in many other things is their wicked will checked'.

Suffering, as well as fear and joy, are simple acts of the will in the spirit; suffering in the demons is an act of the will, hopelessly striving to surmount some unsurmountable obstacle. And the obstacle is an obstacle, precisely because the will is perverted; it is a striving against the things that are, or are not, by Divine ordinance.

This ever-failing effort of the will, against the established order of things, is the demon's suffering. His sufferings are not something outside the will, something lower than the will, his sufferings are the unsuccessful effort of his own will.

In its unsurpassed simplicity, this presentment of the lot of the reprobate spirit is as Dantesque,

through its overpowering reasonableness, as is, in its frightful imagery, the description of the torment of the Prodigal and the Avaricious, in the 7<sup>th</sup> canto of the Inferno,

“From one side and the other, with loud voice,  
Both roll’d on weights, by main force of their breasts,  
Then smote together, and each one forthwith  
Roll’d them back voluble, turning again.”

*Renisus voluntatis ad id, quod est, vel non est*; such is spirit-suffering!

It is suffering (*dolor*), but of a kind absolutely incomprehensible to us. It is as difficult to understand it as spirit-life generally. We have no terms of comparison, to make it less unspeakable. The word suffering (*dolor*) must be used, because it is the last resource of the human language, to express immaterial, never ceasing will-activities that are perpetually in opposition, with no prospect of success.

If once we grasp this great Thomistic concept, that, for a spirit, sufferings are merely simple acts of the most immaterial will, unsuccessfully, though deliberately, in opposition to the harmony of the Universe, we shall think of the Catholic doctrine of everlasting punishment with greater reverence; we shall admire it for its depth and its reasonableness.



Eternal punishment will be no longer our stumbling block; the only stumbling block will be the possibility of spirit-peccability. This once taken for granted, the punishment, understood in the sense of St. Thomas, is hardly a difficulty at all.

Here I may repeat a remark which I made in the chapter on eternal reprobation, and which ought to help our minds to reconcile themselves with the great Christian dogma of Hell. I said that it is of the utmost importance for us to realise that, with a spirit, the power that sins is not different from the power that suffers. It might be said even that the very act that is a sinning is also a suffering, in the spirit mode of suffering: *per simplices actus voluntatis*.

How those simple acts of will, meeting with failure, are suffering, we cannot understand; that they must be suffering, in other words, that they make the spirit the contrary of happy, is known more by faith than by human philosophy. Faith represents the state of the lost universally as an unhappy state.

The simple act of the will, eternally defeated in its object, because the object is against universal harmony, is, so to speak, for the spirit, the only

"Sense of pain". He cannot, in any possible way, be afflicted otherwise. And this brings me to the rôle of Hell-fire, in the penal life of the spirit. Every Catholic has to believe in the physical reality of material elements, which are called Hell-fire, and which enter in some way into the penal arrangements under which lost spirits spend their existence.

We shall see presently how to the mind of the greatest schoolmen, Hell-fire is instrumental in the spirit-punishment not so much as fire, but as a material element; in other words, *materiality*, as such, is the afflicting power of fire. Even other material elements, such as water, could have been made by God a source of affliction to the lost spirit. There is a clear statement of St. Thomas to that effect.

This I say in order to make the reader see at once that our belief is mainly this: A material thing, in opposition to a spiritual thing, has some share in making the spirit unhappy. Catholic belief does not go beyond this very simple concept. The mode in which the material element is afflictive and punitive for a purely spiritual being, is entirely a debatable matter amongst Catholic divines. All

their controversies on that subject are most interesting reading. Very few, if any, look for the solution to the physical and chemical activities of fire.

It may be remarked here that, if physical and chemical activities of material fire could in any possible way afflict a spirit, St. Thomas would have been the last man to reject that explanation of the great mystery. As far as things are possible, he takes matters literally; he never doubts the resources of Nature; he is a strong believer in the stern side of things; he is simple to the extent of being credulous, and his views on the guilt of sin are such as to make punishment, however severe, always appear reasonable.

If we find the great sage rejecting the "burning" as an entirely untenable theory, at least where spirits are concerned, we may rest satisfied that to a mind like his the "burning" of a spirit by fire is nothing short of a contradiction.

The proper place for the treatment of this question would have been the last part of the *Summa theologiae*. St. Thomas died before he reached it. But his views are stated repeatedly, with great forcibleness, in every part of his earlier works; in

the *Summa* itself there are many allusions which show that he never wavered in his conclusions.

I shall quote from the 26<sup>th</sup> question *De veritate*, first article. In that particular treatise, we have one great advantage: The disembodied human soul, and the fallen angelic spirit are spoken of in the same strain. St. Thomas knows of no real difference, in essential conditions, between the disembodied guilty human soul and the reprobate angelic spirit.

There is just one possible theory which might incline one to think that, after all, the disembodied soul could suffer from real burning, even there where the spirit could not be thus tormented. This theory supposes that the human soul, in some way, keeps its sensitive powers, or at least, the roots of them; it could therefore feel the burning of fire.

St. Thomas discards this theory with contempt. "If the human soul went into the next world with its sensitive powers, there is no reason why an animal's soul should not be immortal", he says.

In all respects, the case of the disembodied human spirit resembles the case of the fallen angelic spirits, in this matter of suffering from a material thing. St. Thomas then proceeds to give



his own explanations, after discarding several other explanations, which all are more materialistic than his own.

Material elements detain the reprobate spirit, and circumscribe his activities. They are the prison of the spirit, and this imprisonment, called technically *Alligatio*, is a most effective mode of afflictive punishment, besides being the only possible, nay the only natural mode for a spirit to be overcome by matter.

St. Thomas, with wonderful shrewdness, insists that in whatever way the spirit suffers from matter, it must, to a certain extent, be based upon a natural, congenial relation between spirit and matter: *oportet invenire aliquem modum, per quem aliquantulum animæ patientur ab igne corporeo.*

For even Divine interventions, called miracles, are always dependent on certain pre-existing qualities in the things that are miraculously operative. It implies contradiction that a stone, remaining a stone, should possess thought, but not that it should rise upwards instead of falling, in the vacuum. Movement according to certain lines, is natural to the stone; upward movement, however, is miraculous indeed, but it does not imply contradiction.

St. Thomas then supposes that there is a natural relationship between spirit and matter. A spirit is naturally near matter, is in contact with matter, takes up his abode in matter, when he works upon it as a free agent, when he impresses his own action upon it; for matter is the plaything of the mighty spirit. It is natural to the spirit to be located inside a material Universe, or inside a part of the material Universe, as a free agent, that is to say, as one who is there just because he chooses to be there.

But that he should be so located in a part of the material Universe as to be no longer a free agent, is miraculous.

Practically, St. Thomas admits that the detention of the spirit, in material surroundings, is miraculous; at the same time, the miracle, like all other miracles, is based on a natural aptitude in the spirit, the aptitude to be here, or there, in the material Universe.

To be here, or there, for a spirit, in such a wise as not to be able to leave, is miraculous.

That such detention is afflictive leaves no room for doubt. We know, from what precedes, how all spirit-suffering must be a simple act of the

will, striving against "what is, or is not". Through the miraculous detention, in the Thomistic hypothesis, the wicked will is indeed most effectually baffled.

I have risked trying the reader's patience in giving these lengthy, though perfectly clear views on spirit-penalty. Yet I could hardly be more succinct, without being obscure.

Simple and refreshing like water, the theoretical considerations of St. Thomas are to the *Divina Commedia* what the soul is to the body; they are the real inwardness of the Inferno with its ever narrowing circles.

"Then to the leftward turning, sped we forth  
And at a sling's throw found another shade  
Far fiercer and more huge. I cannot say  
What master had girt him; but he held  
Behind the right arm fettered, and before,  
The other, with a chain, that fastened him  
From the neck down; and five times round his form  
Apparent met the wreathed links."  
This proud one would of his strength  
Against Almighty Jove make trial,  
Said my guide whence he is thus required" (Inferno 31).

Captivity, in connection with the penalty of fallen spirits, is one of mankind's oldest traditions. St. Thomas raises it to the dignity of a meta-

physical verity. It is merely another application of his wonderful definition of spirit-afflictions:

*Renisus voluntatis ad id, quod est, vel non est.*

There is no doubt that the detention of the reprobate spirit in purely material surroundings is miraculous; it could not be but for a direct intervention on the part of God. The material element is an instrument in the omnipotent hand of God, for the punishment of the proud rebellious spirit.

It would seem therefore that at last we have come upon a direct intervention of God, to cause affliction in a created being. Theology puts off such direct causing of created suffering, on the part of God, as long as it is possible. Theology never makes God the agent of suffering, if it can possibly help doing so. We must always give to suffering an explanation that makes it of created, not increated origin. Spirit-sufferings, consisting of simple will-acts that are constantly being baffled in their objects, are evidently of created origin; the disorder of the will is a state freely chosen by the spirit.

But it would seem that the miraculous detention of the same spirit in material surroundings is an exception. The very fact of its being miraculous



makes God the direct author of the suffering. He gives the material element a power which is not natural, but supernatural, with the direct purpose of making the spirit an eternal prisoner.

But I do not think that we are faced here by an exception to the law of the created Universe, the law that says that it is the creature that avenges the creature's sin, and punishes it. To my mind, in this case, as in every other case, it is the World's harmony that necessitates this miraculous imprisonment of the spirits.

We ought to remember that a fallen spirit is fallen only in his will-purpose; his fall means no weakening of any of his powers; it is merely the direction of his powers that is base, the aims he follows that are low and selfish; but in himself, he is not altered; his intellect is as clear as ever; his energies are those which he received when he came from the hand of God, a marvel of power and wisdom; his freedom of will is as complete as before the fall.

Being the enemy of God, and jealous of God, the fallen spirit utilises his powers against God, against the works of God, against the Divine harmony of created things, against that power that makes all things converge towards God.

We see, in our daily observations, how the laws of the material elements are never interfered with by God; how, on the contrary, they do the work of God infallibly, efficaciously. Now, we should do well to remember that the free will of created spirits is a much more potent element in the Universe, from the fact of its being a much more excellent thing. The free will of created spirits does an infinitely larger share of God's work, than the blind laws of matter. God has made the Universe in such a fashion that it lives on itself, in all its immensity and duration; it is made up of free will and necessary laws; and in those two elements it finds eternal consistency. The free will of one of the angelic spirits is a greater element in the World's fulness than the law of Universal Gravitation.

But there is this difference: Necessary laws are invariably good; free will, on the contrary, may be wrong in its purpose; and when it is the free will of a mighty spirit that is gone wrong, it is like the law of Universal Gravitation having turned into a power of disaggregation.

For such an evil, there seems to be no remedy in the Universe, as it is not a particular evil, but a

universal evil; an angelic spirit is an essential portion of the Universe.

In other words, it does not appear that there is, in the created Universe, a power that may check completely and for ever the great thing, a spirit-will, turned rebellious.

As King of the Universe, God has to step in. He circumscribes the evil purpose of the mighty spirit to a certain sphere, to a certain material element, called Hell-fire.

It is a providential disposition in God's intention, to save the harmony of the World from the powers of destruction; in its results, this disposition is intensely afflictive for the spirit thus hemmed in.

The created spirit could never be deprived of free will itself, I mean the internal vital power of will, that chooses as it pleases; such a deprivation would be the same as a spirit's annihilation; we might as well think of the spirit being deprived of intellect.

The only way to baffle a rebellious spirit, is to circumscribe his sphere of action; this is, as I have said, the only meaning of Hell-fire, in the theology of St. Thomas, at least in the case of pure spirits.

But my contention here is this, that God is directly intent on safeguarding universal harmony, in thus circumscribing the spirit's action. The affliction that comes from it, comes more from the spirit's deranged free will, than from the anger of God.

I do not remember having seen this point of view emphasised by any of the great masters. Yet, it is quite in keeping with their principles.

God's punitive Justice does not differ really from His Providence in maintaining the harmony of the Universe; it is the creature's perverted dispositions that make the acts of Eternal Goodness so intensely afflictive.

The detention of the human soul in the material element could of course be viewed from the same point; the human soul has its powers, which it will turn against God.

The disembodied human soul has spirit-privileges, both for weal and for woe.

There are two more points that need our attention: the sufferings of the human individual after the general resurrection, and the sufferings of the just soul in Purgatory. Clearly nothing of what has been said covers these two cases.



The first point belongs to the chapter of the resurrection for woe. The second point demands a separate treatment. So there will be a chapter on the sufferings of Purgatory.

## CHAPTER XXXV.

### Hunger and Thirst for God in the Disembodied Soul.

Writers on things spiritual have described the state of the reprobate as a great hungering and thirsting for God; which hunger and thirst will never meet with their fill.

It would seem as if the reprobate were making the echoes of the lower world repeat his cry: 'Where is God?' and that no answer should come. This sometimes has been the picture of the pain of loss, of the loss of God.

But it is evident that, if there are unsatisfied cravings in the outcast souls, those cravings can have nothing of a high and pure nature. Hunger and thirst for God, or a desire for possessing God, as the great food of our heart, is one of the highest operations of the Holy Ghost in the soul. It cannot be anywhere without the Holy Ghost; its presence would argue great soul-perfection.

Such a description of hunger and thirst for God might be well adapted to Purgatory; but to the land of the outcast, never. A loathing for God, a horror of God would be much more appropriate to the state of reprobation, than a desire for God. We must never forget that the state of reprobation is sin, perpetuated for ever.

This hunger and thirst must therefore be a craving for something else.

A desire for the beauty of one Personal God is a high perfection. A desire for one's own particular satisfaction is in itself an indifferent thing; it is good or evil, if the object be good or evil. Every reprobate has his own particular object which his will holds tenaciously. But it being an object outside the order of the Universe, it can never give happiness. So we may put the cry of the lost like this 'Where is happiness', and his warped conscience answers 'there is no happiness'. The soul in Purgatory may be made to say 'Where is my God', and the Spirit of God whispers 'Behold He is near, He is coming'. The thirst after God comes from Grace, and the quenching of that thirst is eternal life. The craving for happiness comes from the bottom of the human nature. The despair

of ever finding it comes in the reprobate soul from the crushing burden of its past sins.

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

### Purgatory.

Catholic doctrine on Purgatory is based chiefly on that part of Catholic dogma which considers mortal sin to be an offence against Divine Justice. It is theological, not psychological arguments we want in order to establish the doctrine.

The human soul is detained in a state of comparative suffering, owing to the rights of God on the human personality, and not owing to any psychological defects of which the spirit ought to get rid, before he is admitted to the Vision of God.

When we see a human life coming to its conclusion, under circumstances that make us hopeful for the eternal salvation of the soul, we have to confess many times to the fact that the person thus passing into eternity has been full of moral imperfections, during life.

We are instinctively thinking of a transition-state for the departed soul, where all these defects, which made the person appear so ordinary, will be rectified and where the missing moral qualities will be acquired.

Yet such an instinct is theologically inaccurate. We suppose the person to be endowed with sanctifying grace and divine charity. Through them the will is necessarily fixed on God; what might be called the spirit-part of the departed is therefore in a state of absolute rectitude. The defects, so noticeable during life, are in that part of the human being which remains in the grasp of death; consequently the disembodied soul is upright and pure; there is no defect or wrinkle or anything of the kind on it; nothing in fact that requires healing up; its charity is perfect. This is why I said that the doctrine of Purgatory could not be based on psychological considerations. Such is the moral rectitude of the soul that enters Purgatory, that it is absolutely incapable of any deflection; sin both mortal and venial has become an impossibility, through the perfect psychological state of the soul.

Why then is there opposition between the soul and God, that makes God shut the gates of heaven against it for a time, when there is no blemish in the spirit?

Mortal sin has a threefold effect. First it produces, in most cases, evil habits, in the human organism, which make commission of further sins very easy.



In the second place it is an entire upheaval of the spirit of man, a radical reversal of natural conditions in the will, which is the most unchanging part of the spirit. Sanctifying Grace departs from the soul, as it can not dwell in a ruined spirit.

In the third place, mortal sin is an *offence against Divine Justice*, a direct insult to God's Majesty, as we said in the chapter on mortal sin.

Now, the first mentioned effect of mortal sin, as we have just said, remains with the body. The second effect is entirely destroyed, through the return of Sanctifying Grace into the soul, by means of the sacramental absolution, or of perfect contrition. Sanctifying Grace makes the soul a living soul, full of divine harmonies.

But we come to the third effect. The violation of Divine Justice through mortal sin can be repaired only by a person worthy of God. The reprobate in Hell cannot offer to God any reparation for their sin, for the insult they have done to God's Majesty, as their state is essentially and necessarily a state of utter moral worthlessness.

We may therefore easily conceive how the stain of mortal sin is radically deleted in the soul through the gratuitous infusion of Sanctifying Grace, and

yet how God demands from the creature or the soul, thus restored to supernatural life, full satisfaction for the wrong done. This would by no means be contrary to that friendship which exists between God and the sanctified soul. In fact, if God is ever to get adequate satisfaction for the wrong done to His Justice, it is only from His beloved ones, from those that are worthy of Him, He can get it.

Therefore the duty of satisfaction, far from being incompatible with the state of grace, is the proper duty of those that are in grace.

When we say that our sins have been washed away, in the sacrament of penance, we mean it almost literally; that is to say, the stain of the soul has been wiped out. What we call the second result of sin, has been annulled.

The satisfaction due to God's offended Justice has become our new duty, precisely because we are in a fit state now to offer it up to Him. This is why we must do penance for the sin already forgiven. The extent of the satisfaction we owe to the offended Justice of God for our grievous sins is a mystery; it takes its measure from God's wonderful sanctity and purity. Much of it, and

it might be said under ordinary circumstances, all of it, could be paid off through the practice of ordinary Catholic life during the present life, and whatever is still owing at the moment of death becomes the burden of Purgatory; for He will exact the last farthing.

I do not consider here the various mitigations and compromises in this dreadful account by means of which a small sum will pay a great debt, owing to our Lord's satisfaction for us; it does not seem that this part of the redemption follows man beyond this mortal life. When we say here that man in the state of grace is bound to repair the offence given to God in mortal sin we do not forget the atonement of Christ on the Cross; we do not overlook the fact that only the death of Christ could repair the offence of sin 'adequately'. Christ's atonement does not exclude human atonement, as Christ's sanctity does not exclude human sanctity. Christ only did what man cannot do, that is to say, to give an 'adequate' compensation for the offence.

I said that the doctrine of Purgatory is based chiefly on the Catholic view that mortal sin is an offence to God's Justice; this of course does not

exclude venial sin from being visited by Purgatorial suffering, if venial sin is not fully forgiven before death. We call venial sin a disobedience, but the disobedience of a child. As Purgatory is only temporary suffering, it may be a fit punishment for transgressions which do not take away from the soul its capability of possessing God one day.

But more perhaps than the theological reason for the existence of Purgatory, the conditions of the soul in Purgatory are of interest to us.

There must of course be an enormous amount of metaphor on a subject so much written about by Saint and Poet, especially when we know that the *dramatis personæ* are disembodied spirits.

The Catholic portion of mankind feels instinctively for the suffering soul and has called them the 'poor souls'; poverty here as on other occasions expresses an idea of endearment. In order to be popular, a belief of that kind must of necessity express itself in figures of speech.

Theology, however, with its rarified spirituality, never finds popular language to be erroneous. It speaks true, as far as human speech, chiefly born from imagination, can go. Yet it is good for the educated to be able to express the great mystery



to themselves in the language 'of those who know', *quelli che sanno*.

The primary fact in the condition of the souls in Purgatory is this: They are pure spirits, and as remote from sensitive impressions as the angels themselves. What is said sometimes, that the soul retains its senses radically, has to be understood in this way: When the body shall be given back to the soul in the Resurrection, the soul will have the power of causing and governing sense-life, in the reassumed body. But it would be pre-posterous to think of the disembodied soul as retaining even a vestige of sense-impressions; nor would it be less pre-posterous to maintain that God by an act of His Omnipotence makes the soul have sense-impressions, in order to make it suffer; for it is destructive of the nature of a pure spirit to have sensations.

The sufferings therefore of the soul in Purgatory are an exclusively spiritual phenomenon. This of course does not exclude the fact that physical agencies, like fire, may be at work on the disembodied soul. Scholastic theories on the power of the fire as an instrument in God's hand to afflict a spirit are discussed elsewhere (Chapter 33). We adopt

the view of St. Thomas Aquinas who considers that the fire is essentially an agent of repression on spirits.

The physical and chemical effect of fire expressed by the term 'to burn' is of course excluded by all theologians. To deny its physical nature would be temerarious; to make it produce the chemical effects of burning, on a spirit, would be absurd; in some way unknown to the human mind it is an agent of detention, to those holy spirits, who suffer most keenly through being kept, through a low element, from the God with whom everything in them is in perfect conformity.

It is not an uncommon impression amongst non-Catholics, that we Catholics make of Purgatory an intermediate state through which every human soul has to pass, as it were, by a psychological law. Nothing could be less in keeping with Catholic theology than any such psychological law. The fact of a soul going to Purgatory, the length of its exile there, the specific kind of suffering it has to undergo, are all free pronouncements of the Supreme Judge.

Theologians are very reluctant to make of God the direct author of pain and suffering; most of

the afflictions that come to the creature, come to it through the creature's own act, because it has put itself in opposition to some of God's laws; but for Purgatory, theologians take up a different attitude. Its sufferings are directly intended by God; most of them are of a nature almost miraculous, requiring Divine intervention.

The reason of this difference of attitude is obvious. God is dealing with spirits, perfect in sanctity, established in grace for ever, His guests of to-morrow. The debt to be paid is of an entirely moral order, of which God alone can be the Judge, as so much of the offence depended on the individual character, the knowledge and spiritual standing of every particular soul.

With everyone of them individually God enters into judgment. He may forgive, He may abbreviate, He may commute according to His personal relation with each soul.

It is of course to be taken for granted that this judgment is carried out directly and personally by the Son of God as Man, as to Him the Father has given all judgment. It is, so to speak, the most noble, the most delicate part of His office as Judge, to mete out to the elect of God the measure

of pain that will gain them admittance to the Blessed Vision of the Father.

This is why the Saint constantly beseeches Him to be a merciful Judge to him, when he comes to His Tribunal. "It is sweet to think," says St. Teresa "that we shall have Him who is our greatest friend, for our Judge".

There is not one point of resemblance between the pains of the lost and the pains of the souls in Purgatory. The two states have absolutely nothing in common; they cannot be treated in the same chapter.

The pains of the lost are the results of inflexible, universal laws; the sufferings of the soul in Purgatory are the act of God who is zealous for the beauty of His Bride.

It is of great importance in our thoughts on Purgatory to give prominence to that freedom of decision which God follows as His only law, in this matter.

He may remit long periods of Purgatorial suffering for the sake of a humble soul that implores His mercy here on earth, for the prisoners of Divine Justice. There is nothing contrary to theology in what we read of certain saints, that



through their intercessions, hosts of souls were released immediately. The doctrine of Purgatory leaves us wonderfully free in our speculation with regard to the duration and the nature of the Purgatorial process; we need not think that fire is an agent of repression for everyone of those spirits. The doctrine of Purgatory has all the attraction and all the elasticity of modern theories of the intermediate state, without its dangers; the only reservation the Church makes on our theorising is this: no spirit has the benefit of the intermediate state unless he departed this world in charity with God.

For the sake of completeness I must mention one more point before leaving this chapter.

I have considered Purgatory here as having no psychological momentum in the sense of its being a transformation of the soul. I suppose the soul to be perfect in sanctity, detained from the Vision of God by the act of God, simply to make amends to God for past neglect of the divine rights. Yet St. Thomas says explicitly that Purgatory is destined also to purify the soul from the stain of venial sin, from that psychological imperfection which venial sin necessarily leaves in the powers of the soul. This then would point to a real psychological

transformation to be effected by Purgatory. But the difficulty is merely apparent. The soul is in a state of unalloyed charity the moment it is in a spirit-state; now the act by which it places itself in that state of unalloyed charity is an act done outside the body. So broad are the views of our theologians concerning Purgatory that they would call this act a Purgatorial act; and therefore in this sense it might be said that Purgatory has a psychological momentum.

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

### Indulgences.

The Catholic doctrine on indulgences ought to be of easy comprehension, after what has been said. If Purgatory were a process of psychological purification, it would be difficult indeed to understand, how a past meritorious act of someone else could in any way hasten that purification; one might as well speak of the courage of a hero in the past, as being transmitted into the heart of a coward who is living now.

Psychological properties are not communicable. But as the doctrine of Purgatory is based exclusively on the rights of God, how is there any impropriety

in the theory, that God accepts an apology—we should call it ‘satisfaction’ in theology—not only from the offender himself, but also from the offender’s friend, who is at the same time the friend of God. As it is exclusively a question of offended Justice, it matters little how the apology be given, provided it be given, to its full extent; and provided also it be given under the conditions which God in His free will may have chosen to fix.

Another proviso would naturally be this, that vicarious satisfaction should not exclude the personal effort at reparation. For personal effort is a necessary part of personal sanctity. For one could not understand sanctity which would not be a thirsting after justice, an eagerness to give back to God what had been taken away from God through one’s personal act.

The Catholic doctrine of indulgences provides for all these conditions. When I gain an indulgence, I gain it with the conviction that I have offended God’s Justice, and that I owe Him a debt of apology, which might truly be of ten thousand talents. My deep belief in God’s sanctity makes me fearful of a heavy deficit.

To gain the indulgence is like drawing on the superabundant satisfactions of Christ, the Mother of God, and the Saints of the past; in them we find perfect innocence combined with life-long atonements in their own body.

How to make their satisfactions our own, belongs to the administrative powers of the Church of God, whom Christ has made the trustee of the spiritual wealth of the world. Thus we invariably find that the distribution of indulgences is done directly by the living authority of the Church of God, the See of Peter; and is affixed to some spiritual work which is an effort at personal sanctity.

And here we come to the third proviso, which brings with it a temptation to embark on a little controversy with Protestant detractors. For Protestantism has chosen to feel greatly scandalised at that kind of substitution; it considers it to be a fertile source of spiritual laziness.

But there would be a victorious *tu quoque* to begin with, even if the charge were true. Is not the justification-theory of Protestantism based entirely on the substitution of Christ's workings for human workings? And this on a scale far more disastrous to human responsibility, than the substitu-



tion implied in the doctrine of indulgences could ever be.

Indulgences touch obligations which Protestantism does not even admit; for it does not believe in the duty of satisfaction after sin has been forgiven. How unreasonable of a Protestant to feel scandalised at my calling in my friend, to assist me in offering due apology to the God, whom I have offended; to accuse me of trying to eschew my duty, when he has settled himself long ago in the comfortable belief that no such apology need be offered, even after the most grievous transgressions!

But as a matter of fact, indulgences, far from encouraging spiritual idleness, are a fruitful source of spiritual energy. For it is in the very essence of an indulgence to presuppose absolute purity of soul. The stains of the soul have to be washed away, before there is any question of gaining an indulgence.

Indulgences are not substitutes for personal efforts, but their complement; they are a help that comes then only when we help ourselves.

They suppose private efforts at penance, and purity of life; they suppose a complete and faithful accomplishment of every kind of virtue.

Indulgences, in one word, have relation to that part of man's duty towards God that is based on God's supreme rights, as the last End of the human spirit, a class of duties, which, as I have already said, Protestantism has always repudiated.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

### **The Middle-State.**

Purgatory is not as unpopular in England as it used to be, in the happy days of England's unalloyed Protestantism. A hundred years ago, it was one of the "Popish superstitions". Now, it is treated with more favour. It is part of the religious belief of many minds, which otherwise fight shy of Popery.

Yet, it is not altogether a triumph. It would not do for us to publish it abroad that belief in Purgatory is coming back to England, without any further qualification. Many times, where one thought one would find the Catholic dogma of Purgatory, one found instead the most un-Catholic theory of the middle-state, the theory of a second, or third, or fourth existence, after the present life, in which to save one's soul, after a first failure.

Both theoretically and practically, the old Faith admits of only one time of Salvation, the present

life. Life, death, and judgment, one life, one soul, one eternity, these have been in Catholicity the watchwords for spiritual endeavour, at all periods. At death, the soul's fate is sealed for ever. There is no second existence in which to retrieve one's spiritual fortune.

Protestantism, either Lutheran or Calvinistic, if anything, made this stern doctrine sterner still, when it denied the possibility even of Purgatory. Purgatory, as I have explained, whilst perfectly compatible with the old Catholic doctrine about the finality of this one existence, is at the same time that element of mercy, in the stern dogma, which softens its rigours. This, I affirm, Protestantism excluded.

The theory then of the middle-state is not compatible with the principles of Protestantism, though it finds its votaries chiefly among Protestants nowadays. If anything, it would be a step towards Catholicity; or better, orthodox Protestant theology is based on principles that are the very contradiction of the possibility of a middle state, whilst, strictly speaking, there is no such flagrant contradiction between Catholic principles and the possibility of a middle-state.

The Protestant doctrine on salvation is all based on free grace, on the choice of God, on the act of God. If God does not make His choice now, why should He make it later on, when the soul has entered upon some future existence? It looks as if Infinite Wisdom could not make up Its Mind, could not fix upon the object of Its preferences.

The Catholic doctrine of salvation is based on man's work, on man's internal change, on man's personal progress in Sanctity. One could easily understand a Catholic preaching the doctrine of the middle-state; a Protestant would look slightly ridiculous in doing so.

The salvation-principles of Protestantism are diametrically opposed to the possibility of a middle-state; Catholic salvation-principles, as such, are not against it. Yet, Catholicism never tolerated the theory; but the grounds for the exclusion are to be sought in the Catholic view of spiritual beings, in the Catholic comprehension of man's nature, not in the Catholic view of the saving grace.

As long as man can be saved, God will assist him in the work of salvation. After death, his spirit-nature does not allow of salvation, because it does not allow of change.



There is this great difference between the Catholic doctrine of Purgatory and the theory of the middle-state, that Purgatory implies the momentous fact of the human soul departing this life in charity with God, whilst the middle-state theory requires no such soul-perfection; in fact, the middle-state theory has been invented for the benefit of those, who enter the spirit-world in a state of moral hideousness; the middle-state is given precisely with a view to render the ungodly soul upright.

It is evident that belief in a middle-state comes from an anti-Protestant frame of mind; it comes from the consciousness that man must in some way work out his salvation; and in this, the theory is a move on Catholic lines.

But what is un-Catholic in it is this, that it supposes our present life to lack that importance which could make it decisive for eternity. It seems to dream of future states in which every thing is greater, more advantageous, more important, better calculated to make certain the soul's salvation.

But I am afraid that people who talk so glibly of a second, third, and, for the matter of that, a hundredth existence, have never thought of the tremendously changed conditions that prevail after death.

Yet, it ought to be enough to remember how much of our personality remains in the hands of death, to make one realise that it is impossible to talk of a second existence, as a thing that is merely an improvement on the first.

Death is necessarily the total extinction of all our sensitive life; sensitive life goes, both with its good and its evil tendencies; it goes as a power of sin; but it goes also as a power of good.

The soul, in the state of separation, can only have intellect and will, two powers of extreme immateriality and simplicity.

A second existence, for man, must of necessity be an existence totally different from all our human experiences. A second existence could never mean this, that we should then do the things we have neglected to do during the first existence. As all our sensitive life will be gone, we cannot do, or undo, anything of the first, the mortal existence.

The simplicity and immateriality of power, which are the condition of the disembodied soul, render useless any speculations about third or fourth existences; a spirit remains a spirit for ever. If the soul's entering into the spirit-state, the moment after death, does not establish it permanently in

goodness and uprightness, why should it be established thus, later on?

We may speak of unfavourable circumstances for man, in the practice of sanctity, here on earth. Heredity, passions, the allurements of the world, may be spoken of as unpropitious circumstances, entitling a man to fairer play in another world.

But the flesh and the world go at death. There only remains the most spiritual part of man's spirit, that part of him that cannot be the victim of adverse circumstances, as its life does not depend any more on external things.

A middle-state ought therefore to be entirely confined to the state that follows death directly.

This would mean that the fact of separation between soul and body places the soul in a position of making its choice for good or evil, if the choice has not been made in lifetime; or rather, it can mean this only, that those who chose evil, should be given a chance of choosing good, the moment their soul is outside their body.

But this could hardly be called living one's life over again.

So great indeed is the destruction wrought by death that, but for the highest metaphysics and

the Christian Faith, it is to all appearance an annihilation of the human personality. The spirit that, according to highest metaphysics and Christian Faith, survives, is a hidden principle, an impalpable spark, in our present existence. Its survival is anything but a continuation of our present mode of existence.

We must therefore renounce thinking of the middle-state as an attempt at a better life. The next life is simply a state of which we have not the least experimental knowledge.

The only thing we may hope for is this, that, in some unaccountable way, the disembodied soul chooses God, turns towards God, the moment it enters the spirit-state, though the man to whom that soul belonged was a sinner, to the last.

This, of course, would mean infallible salvation for everybody; for why should the disembodied spirit hesitate to turn towards God, now that all the allurements of human sin are gone?

The very fact of death would make man into a pure, holy spirit, however sin-stained his mortal career may have been.

Which of us could hold such a theory, that does away with the distinction of good and evil? Every



human being, however wicked, would be made holy through the mechanical fact of death!

Man having no other human life, through the fact of death, cannot be said to have another chance; another chance means another human life.

If to have another chance means to receive such an existence from God, as was not granted during the present life, we make God responsible for the first failure, not man. If God wants man to be saved, why should He withhold those graces that are indispensable to salvation till a future state, which, in truth, is not a human condition at all?

Or again, it is supposed by the votaries of the middle-state, that, in a future state, man will be better balanced; that his knowledge will be greater, and therefore his temptations to sin much less.

But this view ignores the most essential point in the theology on the possibility and the gravity of sin. Sin is possible there only, where there is free will; its gravity is always proportionate to the knowledge of the sinner. As God has arranged the Universe with an ultimate aspiration for the supernatural state, sin may be found in every condition, however spiritual, except there be some extra supernatural gift, such as the Beatific Vision. So to

speak, there is always a proportion between knowledge and free will; greatest knowledge means greatest free will; sin is possible where there is the highest knowledge, and if it occurs it is the greatest sin. Less knowledge means less free will; sin is possible, as long as there is enough free will; but it is less as free will is less. Evil tendencies that come from heredity and surroundings, by curtailing freedom, curtail responsibility and the gravity of transgressions.

If there is one more chance, there is no reason why there should not be a thousand more chances, in fact, endless chances, till every soul be got into salvation.

The great work of salvation does truly become a game of chance, resembling those games with which we all at one period or another have tried to fill up time, and which consisted in getting a number of small balls within a certain compass. When you have worked half of these balls into the one groove, you try to work in the other half, by tilting dexterously the little board on which the balls run. But your effort only results in setting free again those balls which you had already secured.

## CHAPTER XXXIX.

**The Sufferings of Purgatory.**

The sufferings of Purgatory are in a very real sense more difficult to understand than the sufferings of the eternally lost.

The state of reprobation is a state of confirmed sinfulness, of unceasing opposition to, and a rebellion against, the harmony of the world; it is therefore comparatively easy to understand how suffering may be found in the existence of a spirit or of a human soul of that class. As I said elsewhere, it is not eternal suffering that is the difficulty, it is eternal sinfulness, that is the mystery for the human mind.

With those holy spirits, which Catholic language simply calls the souls of Purgatory, the case is quite different. Not one of the reasons that may be brought forward to establish the doctrine of the sufferings of the lost, holds good for the spirits of the just. There is not, and there cannot be in the spirit of the just any opposition to the will of God, to the harmony of the Universe; they are perfect in charity and love, there is most complete conformity with the will of God, in their own will.

I said, speaking metaphorically, that, for the lost spirit, unsuccessful opposition to the established order of things is the 'Sense of pain'; no such sense of pain is admissable in the souls of the righteous. They are under no providential arrangement that baffles or restricts the wicked designs of a free, but perverted spirit.

We see therefore at a glance that the Catholic doctrine of Purgatory takes us into quite a new sphere of thought. More than ever, metaphors become indispensable to express a state so far above anything experimental, and metaphors have been used, by Catholic generations, to their heart's content. The Church leaves free scope to the imagination of her children; and why should she discourage their efforts at making palpable what is so absolutely immaterial and intangible? Dante's *Purgatorio* is a giant amongst innumerable hosts of minor metaphors. There is no more reason to condemn the cheap print, seen in an Irishman's cabin, shewing souls immersed in flames, with hands stretched out to a consoling angel, than to condemn anyone of the songs of the Florentine Poet. *The right of expressing immaterial things in the metaphor of his own choice is man's oldest and most inalienable right.*



Strange to say, St. Thomas Aquinas has said very little on the nature of the sufferings of Purgatory. The part of the *Summa theologica* which was to contain that subject, was never written by him; he died before the completion of the *Summa*. The principles that explain spirit-suffering in the lost, and which are contained in the first part of the *Summa*, clearly are not applicable to this branch of theology. One of his principles, however enunciated elsewhere, stands us in good stead here. It is this: it is impossible for a disembodied soul to suffer otherwise than through its being in what St. Thomas calls *in statu violento*, 'in an unnatural state'. How the souls of the just may be in an unnatural state and may yet be in a state of perfect sanctity and conformity with the will of God, is again explained through a principle found in the theology of St. Thomas. The principle is this:

The soul of the just man here on earth has Sanctifying Grace; through the possession of that gift, the soul is fit, radically, for the clear vision of God. But the human soul, whilst united to the body, has no clear and ardent desire to see God, because Sanctifying Grace is merely a remote fitness for the Beatific Vision. But the moment the soul is

separated from the body, it has a direct and proximate fitness to see God. It ought to see God, in virtue of its grace, and of its spirit-state. To be kept back from that vision, is, in the language of Catholic theology, *status violentus*, a violent, an unnatural state; the soul is still deprived of what, by the very laws of its charity and its spiritualness, it ought to have, and this deprivation constitutes its suffering.

No heavenly communication, however glorious and refreshing, could be to the soul, thus constituted, a quenching of its thirst. Through Sanctifying Grace and complete spirituality, the human soul is directly and proximately fit for the clear vision of God, and as long as the clear vision is not granted it, by a direct act of God's Omnipotence, the soul is in an unnatural state.

Another principle, which I should call a secondary principle, frequently found in the theology of St. Thomas, is this: the disembodied human soul in charity is directly and proximately fit for the companionship of the heavenly spirits. To be detained far away from that companionship, is another *status violentus*, another unnatural state which must mean suffering.

I do not think that it is possible for theology to go further than this. It is an open question whether a material element enters into the punitive arrangement of Purgatory. The theologians of the Latin Church distinctly lean towards the view that material elements have something to do with the purification of the souls of the just; but the view is far from being a Catholic dogma. If material elements have a share in the purification of the human soul in Purgatory, we must explain such co-operation in the light of the principles just stated: if material elements do punish the soul of the just, they punish it because in some way or other, they keep the soul from the vision of God, or even perhaps from intercourse with the celestial spirits; for to be deprived of the Vision of God and also, perhaps, of the free intercourse with the celestial spirits, is for the human soul in Purgatory the only 'Sense of pain', we can think of.

Everything connected with the purgatorial state of suffering ought to be viewed in that light.

In one of his earliest works, St. Thomas speaks of the sufferings of Purgatory very much in the language of the ordinary catechist. As I have already remarked, it can not be said that he ever

worked out that great problem. In the passage alluded to, he says distinctly that the least pain in Purgatory is greater than the greatest pain on earth. The meaning of this, from the very context, and from the whole genius of his philosophy, can only be as follows: sufferings of the spirit are acts of the spirit; therefore they cannot be compared with acts of the senses. In other words, the least spirit-act is greater than the greatest act of the sensitive powers. It is not exactly a comparison; it is simply asserting the fact that the disembodied soul is in an entirely different and vastly superior state, where all things have different proportions.

It must be remembered that whatever the sufferings of the disembodied souls in Purgatory may be, there is a proportion between the suffering and the power that suffers. If spirit-sufferings are superior to bodily sufferings, the spiritual powers that bear them are likewise superior to bodily powers. It is simply an entirely different state from the bodily state.

The official prayers of the Church invariably allude to a state of peace and tranquillity, when speaking of the suffering souls.



The knowledge that our prayers bring relief to the souls thus detained, comes entirely from Revelation, from the official teaching of the Catholic Church. We could not know it otherwise; and therefore our intercessions for the spirits of the just departed come under laws that are quite different from the obligations of ordinary human pity, as the sufferers are not human beings, but spirits.

The Protestant simply says that there is no Purgatory, because Christ did everything for us. To atone in this life or in the next, is a slur on the atonement of Christ. This chapter therefore is not for him, and I owe him an apology for not having made this observation at the beginning of the chapter, instead of at the end.

## CHAPTER XL.

### The Divine in the Human Soul.

Pantheism, under various forms, has always had a strange power of fascination for thoughtful men. The reasons however of this attraction are not only various, but opposite in their tendencies. They might all be classed under two headings.

The first reason why man is fond of considering everything as God, or as part of Divinity, is his

unwillingness or incapacity to admit Creation *ex nihilo*. To think of a Being, a Personality, making other beings, other personalities, to exist outside itself, with a clearly circumscribed existence of their own, a sharply defined individuality; and doing all this, through an act of will, a freely pronounced *fiat*, is a heavy tax on some minds. Rather than bear the burden of such a thought, man will think of the aggregate of the separate beings and personalities, that make up the world, as of one being, one personality, animated with one universal soul, wise through its own immanent wisdom, rich through the presence of one Spirit, that pervades it all. Creation *ex nihilo* once rejected, pantheism is not only a comforting substitute, it is a logical necessity.

The second class of pantheists are more interesting people; they sin through a noble instinct, a generous craving, the craving for God's nearness. They revolt at the idea of being distant from God, of being separated from God, of being distinct from God. They are bent on having something of the Divine in themselves. The quickest way to do this is to declare themselves parts of the universal Divinity.

I need not analyse for the moment certain spiritual affinities in error: the second class of pantheists, the pantheists of love, unconsciously live on the metaphysics of the pantheists of negation. All I mean to emphasise now is this difference in the psychological causes of pantheism.

Both classes of pantheists, however, are responsible for that belief in the "Divine in man", which, in modernised Christianity, takes more and more the place of the "Divine Grace" of the older theology.

"Divine Grace" fulfills all that which the "pantheist of love" craves for, without opening the door to the pantheism of unbelief. With this latter pantheism I am not concerned here precisely because it is of unbelief.

The definition, or rather description of a spirit, given in the opening chapter of this treatise, makes the created spirit the true and only image of God. He is the seal of God's resemblance. Yet this resemblance does not make him divine, does not raise him above the spirit-plane, into the plane of Divinity Itself. This is done by "Divine Grace" only.

To be a spirit might still be considered a common condition; to be full of Grace is the privileged state.

With the highest of spirits, just as with man, there is the natural and the supernatural; there is that which is in him in virtue of his personality, and that which is in him through a supererogatory favour from God. As it is of the utmost importance, in our knowledge of the perfect life, to have a clear view, an exact and easy definition of the "supernatural", I shall tarry one moment in order to give such a definition. The term is misused sorely in the English language. Any kind of devilry goes by the name of "supernatural".

The supernatural, in Catholic theology, is the state of the created and finite spiritual being, into which it is raised by a direct act of God, separate from the act that created the spirit, following upon that first act and making the spirit inherently capable of seeing God face to face.

The spirit could be a perfect spirit, even a happy spirit, without the supernatural. The supernatural is a result of God's excessive liberality, making those that are happy, happier still, with a new happiness in comparison with which the first happiness seems unworthy of mention.

When it is stated that the supernatural, in the created spirit, is the result of a second act of God's



Omnipotence, working on the work of His own hands, it is not hereby asserted that this second act takes place with every spirit He has created. Nor does it mean that it takes place immediately after the first act. As it is a token of God's excessive liberality, it is essentially a free token. Faith, and Faith alone, is able to inform us when, and under what circumstances this second act takes place.

It is the intrinsic characteristic of the supernatural to be a free gift, to which no creature, however perfect, has any claim. Our masters go so far as to say that it implies contradiction that God should ever create a spirit to which the supernatural would be a necessary psychological outfit, as such a being would be another God.

To make use of a common simile, in order to express the gratuitousness of the supernatural, with regard to all created spirits, high and low, I may say that we all, human souls and seraphs, are equidistant from the supernatural, just as the astronomer who watches a fixed star, from his cottage in a valley, is not more distant from the bright object of his observation than the astronomer

who might be watching the same star from the top of a hill.

The supernatural is inherently connected with the Vision of God face to face; it is either vision itself as in Heaven, or the habitual fitness of the spirit to receive the vision, when all the other psychological conditions are fulfilled. As to the conditions under which the supernatural is communicated to the spirit, human or angelic, Faith has most consoling informations. It is a matter of Catholic doctrine that all angelic spirits have been endowed with the supernatural, at the first moment of their existence. Our first parents before their fall never lived one moment of their life without the Divine gift. Baptism is the certain and infallible means given by God to mankind of entering into the possession of the supernatural.

Baptism is like one of the world's great laws, infallible in its operation, universal in its application. Outside this great law, we know one thing only, viz. that every human creature is the object of some particular Providence that enables it to receive the supernatural. How, where, and when, is the mystery of God. One fact, however, we know. It is this: for an adult, there are certain acts of mind

and will that are indispensable preparations for the supernatural, such as contrition for sin, and sincere resolve to serve God.

Coming now to a more explicit description of Sanctifying Grace, which is for us the divine in man, I say that Sanctifying Grace, or Divine Grace, is the greatest supernatural phenomenon. It may be remarked at once that Catholic theology makes, in practice, man much more divine than does pantheism.

The pantheist, through the very logic of his system, is bound to keep the human individual within the bounds of limited intellectual life; man may be part of Divinity, but he is necessarily and for ever a low part of it. In our theology, the human intellect is raised above itself to the vision of God, as He is within His own infinite Self; for Beatific Vision is the end of Sanctifying Grace.

Sanctifying Grace is the fitness, divinely received, in the human soul, to see God one day, as He is in Himself, and to be happy in this vision of Him. Sanctifying Grace may be said to be the education or elevation of the created spirit, making him capable of seeing the beauty of God, when God will come to him and tell him: "Behold here I am, the God of thy heart."

Human genius may have done its best, in producing one of its masterpieces; if there be no corresponding artistic education, or anyhow a natural gift of artistic perception in the beholder, even the "Transfiguration" will be just another number in the gallery of arts; the masterpiece is there, but what a different tale it tells the beholder as he has eyes or no eyes for it, according to his education or his instinct!

Such is precisely the office of Sanctifying Grace in the human soul; it gives the created spirit eyes for God's hidden glory; it gives him a heart, vast enough to enter into the joy of a God, Who dwells on High. It is then this conformity of the created spirit with the Uncreated Spirit, enabling the created spirit to understand the Uncreated Spirit, which we call Sanctifying Grace.

Sanctifying Grace is therefore a permanent state of the spirit, a state destined to last for ever. Just like the spirit himself, it is unending from its very nature. God never takes it away from the soul, through a direct act of His Omnipotence.

How it may be lost through the act of mortal sin, on the part of the spirit, I have explained in the chapter on mortal sin.



Sanctifying Grace is the Divine light in the soul, whose radiance can never fail; but the lamp on which it is burning may be broken to pieces; the light itself would have been burning for ever, as it is eternal light.

It is, I think, easy even for those to whom theology is not familiar, to see the difference between Sanctifying Grace, and what we usually call grace. By grace we generally mean a Divine assistance, that helps us in our spiritual life at a given moment, in a given difficulty. It is a light dawning all at once upon our mind or upon our imagination. It makes us see a particular fact, from a new point of view, and reconciles us with the fact that first irritated us. It is a sustaining power given to our will, making it to do things from which at one time it recoiled with horror.

It is the unction in prayer, the joy in suffering and poverty; it is infinitely multitudinous in its workings, following up the particular bent of every character with astonishing subtlety, and conquering our most enduring obstinacies.

Helps of that kind are called actual graces; they are not graces in the same sense in which

Sanctifying Grace is a grace; for we know how the sinner, still stained in his soul, may be under the influence of actual grace, at the time when through his very state of sinfulness, his soul's condition is the very contradiction of Sanctifying Grace.

Actual graces are direct, and transient operations of the Holy Ghost, on our intellect, on our will, on our senses. They help us to do good; we feel them when they come; we long for them when they are gone, we pray for them to return. Their importance is measured by their usefulness. Their adaptation to the particular difficulty of the individual character is one of their characteristics.

None of these features are to be found in Sanctifying Grace. It lies deep in the centre of our spirit, unnoticed by man, as long as his soul is in the body. It never changes, but it grows more intense; it is not adapted to the complexities of the individual character, but it is the uniform brightness that makes all the children of God bear the same family likeness. It is to be observed, however, that the actual graces just described are given by the Holy Ghost only with a view to produce, and augment Sanctifying Grace in the soul.

Actual graces are the army of God, to fight the battles of that most kingly gift of God's liberality, Sanctifying Grace.

Sanctifying Grace is entirely Divine in its origin. Through a direct act of His Omnipotence, God causes it to come into the human soul. It is so high in its nature, and lies so deep in the human soul, that nothing short of mortal sin can touch it.

Venial sin, committed ever so repeatedly, does not lower it, does not tarnish it. There may be a vast measure of Sanctifying Grace in a person of many moral failings, as long as those failings have not reached grievous culpability.

Sanctifying Grace may exist, and does exist in the soul, before the soul awakens to reason, as in the baptised infant. When reason has been dimmed and obscured by some cerebral infirmity, it remains. Outwardly, those unhappy people appear to be unreasoning children; inwardly they are the temples of the Living God.

Mental weaknesses are those at which a theologian is least scandalised; he knows how the Grace of God may have hall-marked that soul for a World, where there will be science above measure, one day.

Sanctifying Grace admits of progress. It grows more and more abundant in the faithful soul, through the divinely assisted acts of spiritual life. The Building up of character has been made the religious watchword of many in our own days. No expression could be more Catholic, provided we give it a meaning vast enough to be useful for eternity. Our divinely assisted acts, as we have described them above, when speaking of actual graces, are a constant building up of the moral character. Through them, man becomes first the *homo quadratus*, "the square man", whom the ancient philosophers envied for the perfections of his moral character.

But there is a building up of character unknown to pagan philosophy, and modernised Christianity. It is this:

Every virtuous act, prompted by the Holy Ghost, brings about in the depths of the human soul an increase of Sanctifying Grace; and thus makes the transitory virtuous act to result into something higher than itself: a more complete possession of the unchanging participation of the Divine Nature. This is the only true building up of moral character, according to Catholic theology.



## CHAPTER XLI.

## The Light of Glory.

In the works of our masters, a good deal of space is given to what they call *lumen gloriæ*, 'the Light of glory'. In fact, the space devoted in the columns of their folios to *lumen gloriæ* is equal to that which they consecrate to the Vision of God; and they are wise in doing so, as *lumen gloriæ* is the one element that is wanted to make the Beatific Vision our *own* act, our *own* joy.

We may speak of it here at some length, precisely because it has a great moral significance. For the teaching on *lumen gloriæ* makes it clearer than any thing else, how through the dignity of our present life, we are made capable of the Vision of God; and how the present spiritual strength of our higher powers results in an everlasting capability of entering into communication with God. *Lumen gloriæ* or the Light of glory is something quite distinct from Beatific Vision. Its name might be misleading; Beatific Vision could be called Light of glory as it is called eternal light, because through it we see God who is Light, and in whom there is no darkness of any kind. But *lumen*

*gloriae*, or the Light of glory, technically, is not God, seen face to face; it is the *capability* of the created mind to see God.

A little thought will convince us how, previous to that wonderful vision, the created mind must have been made capable of the vision, and that vision is possible only because the mind is capable of it; and the extent of the vision is measured by the degree of the mind's capability. Now the mind as such is not capable of this high act, through its natural endowments. The human mind, or even the angelic mind, for the matter of that, is not only infinitely distant from, but is also absolutely incapable of the Vision of God.

Therefore God gives to the mind a new power, a new capacity; He spiritualises so to speak it more completely, to the extent of making it spiritual or immaterial enough to see God, if God offers Himself to the mind as the mind's Idea.

The uninitiated would hardly be able to see why theologians insist so much on the necessity of that mental spiritualising, previous to the Vision of God. The greatest among them maintain that it implies sheer contradiction, for a created mind, to see God without thus previously having been more im-

materialised. Consequently they hold that it is impossible, even for God, to give Beatific Vision without having first given the Light of glory. What our masters are anxious to safeguard is the created mind's share in that wonderful act of Beatific Vision.

It is my mind that will see God as He is in Himself, the very mind that is thinking now, whilst writing this; and it will see God, because it will be capable through God's grace, of seeing Him, as my bodily eyes are capable now of beholding the picture opposite me. This wonderful act of Beatific Vision, it is the act of man, is not the act of God. Moreover the degree of Beatific Vision will depend entirely on the intensity of that great endowment. We shall see what our eyes will allow us to see.

The doctrine of the Light of glory is the noblest and highest instance of that essentially Catholic conviction, that man does, in Eternity, not what God through an arbitrary disposition makes him do, but what man has made himself capable of doing through the grace of God in mortal life. For the Light of glory is merely the sequel of Sanctifying Grace; it is the same entity, the same

supernatural reality; the difference between Sanctifying Grace and the Light of glory, if there be any, would be merely the difference between youth and mature age in the same individual.

This is what may be called the practical human side of *lumen gloriæ*.

Sanctifying grace is given to us and given to us more abundantly, through the acts of Christian life, done in the body of our mortality.

We have thus a doctrine which is as consoling as it is significative of the value and importance of our Christian lives here below. Through the acquisition of more abundant Sanctifying Grace we acquire *lumen gloriæ*; we acquire the capability of seeing God; we acquire that Divine nobility of intellect, that heavenly stability of mind, that makes us fit radically for the Vision of God.

How does Sanctifying Grace become Light of glory? Separation between soul and body, in other words the state of a pure spirit, does not make Sanctifying Grace into *lumen gloriæ*.

The souls in Purgatory, for instance, who are as we know, in a perfect spirit-state, have Sanctifying Grace and yet they do not see God. Their Sanctifying Grace has not become *lumen gloriæ*



yet. Our masters have said little on this evolving of Sanctifying Grace into *lumen gloriae*.

They are unanimous in affirming that *lumen gloriae* is Sanctifying Grace fully developed, and there their teachings and explanations stop.

We may be forgiven, if we go one step further, which after all will be merely an obvious application of a principle they all admit. It is the mystery of the Incarnation that furnishes a parallel case.

There, our Lord's manhood becomes Divine through an act of God's creative Omnipotence, that unites the human nature with the Divine Person in a perpetual union. So likewise, it would seem, that in Beatific Vision, an act of God's Omnipotence unites the human intellect, already immaterialised through Sanctifying Grace, with God as Idea.

This act of God's Omnipotence seems to be indispensable for the realisation of what has been radically in the soul all along. An attentive reader might be tempted to say: 'Beatific Vision is the union of the created intellect with God as Idea, whilst Incarnation means the union of human nature with the Divine Person. Beatific Vision and Hypostatic Union seem closely allied, seem to belong to the same plane of spiritual possibilities.'

Our masters readily grant this similarity. They consider that nothing short of this similarity could make us the brothers of the Incarnate Son of God. 'For now we are called the sons of God, and are such, though it has not appeared yet what we shall be one day; but when He shall appear, we shall be like unto Him, because we shall see Him as He is' (1 John iii. 1 2).

## CHAPTER XLII.

### Beatific Vision.

I think I am right in saying that most men have made for themselves a Hereafter, in keeping with their special spiritual temperament. We all have our own Paradise, and it is a frequent occurrence to change our views of Paradise, as our mind changes, and our needs take new forms; we may get tired of views which we have long entertained and cherished, on this matter.

Now there is the Catholic theology on heavenly happiness, wonderfully sober in its majesty, and sooner or later it is the thing we all want, in order to find satisfaction for our mind and our heart. The Vision of God is the central joy of Heaven. It is not merely a theological opinion, that the

spirit of the saved will see God for ever; it is a matter of Catholic Faith. Both tradition and explicit definitions of general Councils have raised it to a dogma of the Catholic Church. To doubt it, is secession from the Church of God.

There is almost unanimity amongst the masters of sacred theology in the explanation of the mode, in which man is raised to the Vision of God. It may be said that this doctrine, whose personal importance for everyone is simply immeasurable, is one of the best defined and best understood articles of faith.

We find too, in practice, that it is a doctrine easily grasped, even by the simple; a doctrine that appeals even to the child; and so it ought to, as Beatific Vision is the direct result of all the acts of our higher life here on earth.

The very simplicity of this doctrine of Beatific Vision gives it a great power for strengthening the moral man, for making us more spiritual; for we are spiritual not through pious imagery, but through the assimilation of simple but far-reaching principles. The Vision of God, as the term implies, is the seeing of God, not with the bodily eyes of course, but with the mind.

The main idea conveyed by the term 'Vision' is this: it is God, as He is, in Himself, Who is seen by the mind; it is not a mere image of Him, a mere idea of Him, however clear; it is Himself. It is a direct, unintercepted gazing on God's Beauty.

Our masters are aware of the fact, that it is in the power of God to give the created mind very vivid knowledge of Himself; God has endless ways of making the created mind know Him; but all these ways fall infinitely short of Beatific Vision.

In Beatific Vision, according to the profound doctrine of St. Thomas, God Himself becomes the idea, that is in the mind of the Elect. All our cognitions are ideas, of more or less extent and clearness, that come to our mind through a hundred channels. We see clearly that the idea of a thing is not the thing itself; for the thing is outside me, whilst the idea is in my mind, and makes of my mind, from an unknowing mind, a knowing mind.

Now, says our great master, in Beatific Vision, there is no such idea of God, as distinct from God, to stand for God in my mind. God's very nature is the idea. In fact God has to be the idea, for nothing could ever do duty for God Himself in my mind.



If I am to know Him as He is, He must be Himself the idea that makes my mind a knowing mind. We easily see how knowledge, in the words of the schoolmen, is invariably based on the idea of the thing being in the mind, whilst the thing known has its existence outside the particular mind. I may have a constant thought of a person dear to me, a thought that is representative of many of the attractive qualities of that person; but I see all along that the person is outside me altogether.

It does not seem possible even for a pure spirit, to think of a fellow-spirit otherwise than through one of these representative ideas. No spirit, in his particular personality, could be actually in the intellect of another spirit. God alone is given by theologians what they call *illapsus*, the power of being personally within a created mind. Both the existence of such a power, and the exclusive possession of it by God, are theological certainties; in Beatific Vision God makes use of that power.

The eternal hills rise higher and higher, and the thoughts of God on their summits are getting purer and purer; but they are mere thoughts of God, they are not God yet. They are mere ideas of

God. Those thoughts are so high indeed, that if one of them were communicated to us mortals, we should feel as if we had been lifted bodily to the Throne of God; yet even on those high summits, the created mind has not met with God yet. In Beatific Vision, God Himself is the idea, God Himself is in the mind; and here we have the radical difference between Beatific Vision and every other kind of Divine knowledge, however sublime.

A comparison might be made between Beatific Vision and the Incarnation; the comparison is suggested more than once by St. Thomas himself, and we hope that by making use of it we are not explaining an obscure thing, by a more obscure one. I think most readers may be able to follow the comparison.

In the Incarnation, it is not a created or finite resemblance of the second Person of the Trinity, that is united with manhood; it is not some wonderful supernatural gift that makes this human nature to be Divine; it is the Second Person of the Trinity, directly united with human nature, without any intermediary grace, that makes Christ's human nature to be Divine. For created supernatural gifts could only make it Holy, but not Divine.

The Increated Person of the Word alone could make it Divine. So likewise in Beatific Vision, the Increated Godhead alone, in the created mind, makes this latter know God. No created idea, or representation of God, could do it.

From what precedes, we shall readily fall in with this theological conclusion: the Vision of God, enjoyed by the Blessed, is the vision of the Totality of God.

God's perfect simplicity of nature makes this conclusion a necessity. By this we mean that the Blessed behold intellectually not only all and everyone of God's attributes, but also behold the Trinity of God; in one word, every elect beholds the Infinity of God, though he does not behold that Infinity with infinite intellectual keenness.

This distinction will be made clearer in the next chapter. God is infinitely simple; but we know that scripture and theology have, as it were, seen various characteristics in God, called God's attributes. Goodness, Sanctity, Justice, Omnipotence, Mercy, and so on, all infinite in intensity and extent, are some of the attributes of God. Those divisions of God's perfect way into classes are not mere forms of speech; they are founded on the fact that God's

infinite simplicity is also infinite fulness and multiplicity. Thus for instance, what we call Divine Justice, is not at all the same thing as Divine Mercy; and the claims of Divine Justice are not the same as the claims of Mercy. In the Beatific Vision then everyone of those known and unknown attributes of God is beheld by the glorified mind, though not, as already said, with infinite keenness of mind.

It would be entirely against the characteristics of the Beatific Vision to suppose that in it, anything in God is only half unveiled to the mind, leaving it to the mind to try and guess the hidden part.

All that is revealed, is revealed most clearly, so as to give complete mental satisfaction to the intellect.

If some of the elect know more, their privilege does not rest on a clearer perception of a thing, seen more dimly by the less exalted saint.

It would not be vision for the less exalted saint if he saw only dimly. The privilege of the higher saint is this: to be admitted into entirely new mysteries which the totality of vision spoken of above does not include. How this is possible I hope to explain to my reader in the next chapter.



## CHAPTER XLIII.

## On The Degrees of Vision.

It is one of the fundamental feelings of the Catholic heart, that eternal life is shaped by temporal life; that every good deed done in the body has its particular reward in a new happiness given to the human spirit in heaven; that every act, inspired directly or remotely by the love of God, is an eternal acquisition, that cannot be lost, if the soul perseveres in the state of grace to the end.

Equality of state and happiness in heaven is a thing repugnant to the Catholic mind; and to believe that star differs from star in Heaven, is the delight of the humble and generous heart. These inequalities, based on inequalities of merits, acquired during mortal life, will be found, no doubt, in every branch of celestial glorification. A martyr, for instance, will have at least a partial superiority to the elect who came into the land of the living, without having been asked the heroic price of his blood.

The act of fortitude included in martyrdom will be a partial superiority, though the martyr need

not be superior to another elect in every respect; but he is superior in the glory that comes from heroic fortitude.

When we speak of superiority or inferiority amongst the Blessed, we speak of absolute superiority and inferiority, of differences in the Beatific Vision. It is the Beatific Vision that gives the saint his eternal position in the House of God. The reading of the lives of the Saints has familiarised us with the doctrine of the varying degrees in the Beatific Vision. Who for instance has not heard of the protestation of St. Teresa, declaring that for one more degree of Beatific Vision she would be ready to live and fight and suffer to the end of the world, deeming an additional degree in perfect Vision, a reward exceedingly great?

But here we are confronted by the difficulty already insinuated in our preceding chapter and held over till now.

With all theologians, we have asserted that it belongs to the very essence of the Beatific Vision to reveal the totality of the Godhead to the created mind. No elect sees God, without seeing everything of God. Where then is the differentiation? It is perhaps one of the most vexed questions in sacred

theology. The elect with greater merits sees God more perfectly; this is Catholic faith. That every elect sees Him entirely, is Catholic faith likewise. No elect comprehends Him fully; this is a third article of faith, which gives to God, and to God alone, a full comprehension of Himself.

St. Thomas, however, does not desert us in these high regions, and his solution of the theological difficulty is a very persistent one, found in all his writings. It may be broadly stated in the following manner, though, in stating it, we follow more his spirit than his word.

In God, there are those things that could not be otherwise, precisely because He is God. They are what is called His necessary attributes, and these are seen to their full extent by all the elect. But in God there is free will; He acts, because He wants to act; He is not compelled to act in this way or that; it is a part of God, which entirely escapes the eye of the beatified beholder as such, because, being acts of His free will, they do not follow necessary laws.

Thus, for instance, it is God's free choice that the Incarnation should have taken place at such

and such a time and under such and such circumstances.

We all see how these free acts of God, infinite in number and possibility, constitute inside God, as it were, something new, precisely because they are free. Now, it is the constant teaching of Aquinas, that admission into this Divine Privacy, into the knowledge of God's free doings, past, present, and future, constitutes the higher reward or the higher vision. They are called the secrets of the counsels of God. The Blessed Mother of God, for instance, reigns supreme in the Beatific Vision, because she is admitted more completely than any other creature into the hidden dealings of God with the created Universe.

It is, I think, easy, even for the non-theological mind, to see, how this distinction between what is necessary in God and what is free will in God, establishes a clear and certain limit between simple vision and comparative comprehension, added on to simple vision. It shows how the Totality of God may be seen and how at the same time much may be hidden, as God's free acts, from the very fact that their freedom is not so much a part of God's nature, as of God's will.



Such then is the solution of the Angelic Doctor. All the same, it took the writer of this book a long time to find rest and satisfaction in this solution. It had always seemed to him that more abundant knowledge of merely free acts could not constitute adequately a state of superiority, for one who has toiled more abundantly during life.

This all the more, as God's free dealings with his created Universe could be made known to a created mind, outside Beatific Vision, through the communication of ideas that are not God Himself. But more assiduous study of the great *Summa* has convinced him of the wisdom of St. Thomas Aquinas in this matter.

Free acts, in the creature, are transitory things; to know them may be instructive; but it is not an illumination of the mind; it is not a raising up of the mind to a higher plane of thought and intellectual life; they are so to speak mere history, mere facts. But such is not the case with the free acts of God. They are eternal wisdom; they are eternal justice, they are, as Aquinas says somewhere, though not in connection with this matter of the Beatific Vision, the rules of Goodness. To know one more of these acts is to know not only what God does, but much more what He *is*.

This difference between the created free act and God's free act makes it quite clear to me how St. Thomas could have made higher heavenly life to consist in more copious knowledge of God's free-will determinations.

## CHAPTER XLIV.

### Participated Eternity for the Human Soul.

It has always been a question asked by the pious and thoughtful: "How is there no such feeling, in eternal life, as monotony? And how, in the Vision of the unchanging God, is there eternal freshness, eternal interest?"

But we must soar above imagination, and try to understand something of the wonderful unchangeableness of the act of the Beatific Vision.

To see God *for ever* is a phrase that does not give the whole content of the theological doctrine. We must not think of that glorious life as of an endless succession and repetition of the same act, so that to see God *for ever* would be merely to see Him day after day, during the eternal years.

The Vision of God is eternal life.

Now our masters consider, that the term "eternal" here has a technical and exclusive meaning. We

must define eternity: the actual, total, and unchanging possession of life. Unchangeableness and totality of all happiness, in that unchangeableness, is God's eternity. It is not so much an endless life as an unchangeable life, unchangeable because it is a complete and absolute totality. Our eternal life then, or our eternal Vision of God, is eternal in the sense in which God is eternal.

This wonderful act of Divine Vision has an entirely Divine characteristic: eternity. Our masters call it "Participated Eternity". They consider that, in this highest of intellectual regions, the Vision of God, a creature actually shares a Divine attribute, eternity of act.

Thus the act of Beatific Vision is not a successive act, is not an everlasting act, in the sense in which any spiritual creature is everlasting, because indestructible. It is more than all that: it is eternal, as God is eternal; unchanging, because it is, all at once, the totality of every good.

No other act of the spiritual creature, however perfect the creature may be, has that characteristic of eternity. They are all transitory, successive acts. They succeed each other for ever and ever.

The act of Beatific Vision alone is above the divisions of time, and has a stability far superior to the stability of the *ævum*.

Our masters do not see any psychological impossibility in a mind having one eternal act, whilst having, at the same time, many successive acts of a lower order, subject to the rules of ordinary mind-time.

We have in Beatific Vision mind-eternity, which alone can make a perfectly happy state.

Frequent reflection on this possible eternity, for our created, everchanging minds, may become for us the source of great spiritual strength.

We might find it hard work, at the beginning, to find satisfaction in the prospect of an unchanging act. Our whole earthly life is a succession of new emotions. But the emptiness, which constant newness of emotions leaves behind itself, will make the thoughtful happy in the belief in a state so perfect, that its eternal sameness is its eternal newness.

The theological doctrine of Participated Eternity has brought us to the highest summit of human perfectibility. To see God is wonderful; to see Him through an eternal act is a wonder equal to the first.



## CHAPTER XLV.

**Spirit-Animation or Resurrection.**

One might make a distinction in the human soul between the soul and the spirit, not of course in the sense of a twofold entity, but of a twofold state. Whilst the soul spends itself in animating the body, it might be said to act only as soul; for by soul we understand primarily an immaterial substance animating an animal organism.

In the state of separation the soul is only spirit, without an actual or even possible animating office. It is in this sense that our masters distinguish between soul and spirit.

They repudiate, as we well know, any plurality in the immaterial substance of the soul. I said just now that the soul in a state of separation is devoid not only of an actual, but also of a possible animation; we take animation here in its active sense.

This apparently seems to contradict the dogma of resurrection, when the soul is believed to come back to its body to animate it again. But our answer is readily at hand. As one of our greatest masters, Cajetan, says, in the resurrection, the human

soul gives life to the body, not as a soul, but as a spirit.

This is a deep and important distinction, well calculated to explain the Christian dogma of the resurrection of the body, as contained in the Epistles of St. Paul.

One thing is certain: Though we may consider the state of separation as less advantageous than the state of union between soul and body, yet the fact of disembodiment has given to the soul new attributes, which are inamissible, as for instance the inflexibility of will, the capacity of knowing the spirit-world directly as it is in itself. Mutability of purpose, and the soul's ignorance of its own self, came from the union with the body; through the separation it came to have a clear knowledge of its own essence, to make of its own self the medium through which it considers all other things.

These are some of the exclusive features of the spirit-state, and they are, as I said, inamissible.

So when the hour for re-animation comes—an hour the Father only knows—it is evident that the human spirit is in a condition entirely different from the conditions under which he first

animated the body, at the origin of the human individual.

This is why our masters say that the soul animates not as a soul, but as a spirit, in the resurrection of the flesh.

In the first animation the law is this: the soul is made conformable to the body, superior to it of course, as spirit is superior to matter, yet conformable to it, so as to make of the two a harmonious compound.

The body comes first, transmitted as it is by the laws of heredity; the soul is created by God to animate the organism. Our masters say that the causality of the organism is what they call a *causa occasionalis*; that is to say, God creates the soul to complete His own laws, and created causality is for Him the *occasion* for that completion. But St. Thomas is most explicit in stating that God adapts the soul to the perfection of the organism, so that the soul coming from His Hand is more or less perfect according to the perfection of the organism. He does not say in what this "more or less" consists; only he teaches for our consolation that it is not a "more or less" in every respect, but only in certain respects.

Thus, he says, with the simplicity of a great genius, a man of small stature may be a better or a cleverer man than the one of large stature; yet this does not prevent the giant being superior to the dwarf in stature. I mention this difference, which in practice need not concern us, to point out the fact how our masters in their wisdom made of the body the measure of the soul. In their teaching on the Resurrection, however, they adopt the opposite law of action and make of the dis-embodied spirit the measure of the body.

The soul, returning to the body, gives that body everything, even its individuality, or what might be called more loosely, its personality. This is the express teaching of Cajetan. It is a great concession on the part of a Scholastic of the mark of Cajetan to say that the soul, the spirit, should give the body its individuality, when it was the body that gave the soul its individuality, at the first union, the union of the mortal days.

When man is first made through the laws of generation, according to a unanimous consensus of Catholic schoolmen, the body is at least the occasion for the soul to be made, and to be made this



particular soul, by God. When man is re-made, at the Resurrection, the body, on the contrary, is made this particular body through the soul that comes to it or returns to it.

I make a distinction here between coming to the body and returning to the body. For Cajetan supposes that there are cases where the matter of the previous body is not to be found any more, and when God in His Omnipotence supplies the matter for the new body. In that case Cajetan considers that the soul has enough resources in itself to give that body its individual character, that makes it to be like the body that is gone.

The possible events to bring about such an entire disappearance of a human body are cleverly put by Cajetan. Suppose, he says, generation after generation of men have fed almost exclusively on human flesh; there must be a passing of one body into another body. In an extreme case like this, God has to supplement the "missing flesh", and the soul has the power to give it such characteristics that it is again the self-same human individual that it was in the days when the earth was its abode.

## CHAPTER XLVI.

**The Resurrection for Woe.**

The Resurrection of the body of the elect is the highest triumph of God's grace. There is comparatively little difficulty in believing in it; it is a sequel of the whole of the supernatural economy, connected with our Lord's Resurrection. But this doctrine has its dark side too. It is a two-edged sword.

It is a matter not only of theological certainty, but of Catholic faith, that the reprobate also will rise in their bodies, to bear in their flesh the fruits of their deeds.

It would seem as if resurrection were one of God's primary ordinances, to be universally effective for the happiness of mankind. That for some it should become greater confusion and suffering, is not the fault of the Divine ordinance, but is owing to the perverted state of the soul.

Not to admit resurrection for the reprobate, means shipwreck in faith. The theological difficulties of the doctrine are more considerable, however, in the case of the Reprobate than in the case of the Just.

We can easily understand how, for the elect, God endows their body with gifts and qualities that make them the fit instruments of the glorified spirit. No such direct influence of the Divine action exists for the reprobate spirit.

Reprobation means, as we know, rejection.

That the risen body of the reprobate is given immortality is evident from the very fact of resurrection. How this immortality is given to it, is a more difficult problem. St. Thomas, though he be so emphatic in declaring that it is the very nature of the risen body of the reprobate to be immortal, does not admit of a direct and continuous act of God, keeping the body everlastingly in existence for punitive purposes. Such a direct act on the part of God is entirely against the genius of Scholastic theology. St. Thomas finds the explanation of the incorruptibility of the human body in the entirely changed condition of the material Universe.

It goes without saying that the bodies of the reprobate are perfect, as far as the organism is concerned. Nature's work in the first production of the human body is often hampered; it rarely produces a perfect body. Not so in the resurrection,

where the only law is God's Omnipotence and the spirit's activity.

It is most untheological to think of the nation that has to live Below, as one of horrifying monstrosities. But if incorruptibility and natural completeness and perfection are the conditions of the bodies of the unhappy, these bodies are not above passivity, i. e. the capability of suffering.

Here once more Christian dogma must overrule sentimentality. That fire is a source of suffering to those risen bodies must be held by every Catholic. But even here the explanations of St. Thomas lift the dogma to comparative immateriality. The action of the elements on the reprobate body must differ entirely from the action of the elements on our mortal body here below. As in the case of spirits, we have to admit here the reality of the fire. But we admit more: an action of the fire that causes bodily suffering. St. Thomas, however, is explicit in stating that it is a spiritual action, not a material action. St. Thomas holds that the fire has a real effect, an effect which he compares with the effect of the light on the eye. It is a real effect, yet it does not alter the eye, or change its state.



Such, he says, is the action of that fire. Beyond this theory he teaches nothing.

With this, Christianity may face the world and its sentimental humanitarianism. After all, what is Christianity but an intense belief in human personality, making of man a responsible being, to choose for himself, to shape his eternity.

In the eyes of the humanitarian, God is very much like the man whose sole office it would be to throw food to flocks of irresponsible fowls; to feed and to fatten is all that man is expected to do.

To find fault with the finalities of Catholic theology is ignorance of the Catholic conditions for salvation. Moral responsibility is never greater than knowledge. Higher knowledge will mean higher responsibility.

There would always be the same proportion between knowledge and responsibility even after a thousand migrations, or incarnations or phases of existence, if such were granted.

There is no more reason to give three chances to a creature than one, considering that every time the thing hangs not on knowledge or circumstances, but on free will. But, I dare say, with many, there is some such view as this at the back of their

mind: the individual, who has made, as the saying goes, "a mess" of his life, when he comes into the next, realises what danger he has escaped, and instantly he starts retrieving his fortunes and making amends. But who does not see that there is a flagrant begging of the question in this very assumption; how could he ever realise that he has escaped from a great danger through his sinful mortal career, when it is, as our friends say, the ordinance of a kind Providence, that a man should have as many chances as he could possibly wish for? Therefore there was no danger in making bad use of his first chance.

It may be safely asserted that Catholic theology, even in this matter of the bodily resurrection of the reprobate, has no other sufferings or inconveniences for them, except such as come from the conditions of the material Universe in which they will find themselves.

They are simply part of the world to which they clung, and above which they never rose.

There is among the minor works of Cajetan a sermon preached on the first Sunday of Advent, in the year 1504, in the presence of Julius II. and his court. The sermon is a master-piece of theological

conciseness, and one cannot help admiring men who would listen to discourses of such profundity. In that sermon Cajetan explains, to the satisfaction of the vigorous Pontiff, spirit-penalty and the action of Hell-fire, in the same way in which I have tried to explain those great truths to my modern reader.

## CHAPTER XLVII.

### The Human Soul and the Angels of God.

From the very beginning of this book we have mentioned the doctrine of St. Thomas that the human soul after this mortal life enters into a pure spirit-existence.

I shall now give some of the theology on the Angels as far as it has any connexion with the history of the human soul.

The theology on the Angels is far from being a mere abstraction, a kind of intellectual curiosity. It has a practical bearing, the importance of which could hardly be exaggerated. Just as God is to be the God of our heart, so are the Angels to be the spirits that will keep company with our spirit. Our life, after the dissolution of the body, is to be intimately connected with the life of the Angels. The highest perfection of the redeemed and glorified

1. " Deus coram me, pater mea Deus in  
ultimus

2 soul is the vision of God. Next to that, there is the vision we shall have of the Angels of God. To see them as they are, to share their life, to be one of them, all this belongs to the glorified, the elect soul.

It might even be said that this companionship with the heavenly spirits is more within man's claims than the blessed vision of God. We fight bravely here on earth, whilst we are in the tabernacle of our mortality, against the errors and snares and fascinations of our senses; we fight in order to be spiritual, when all that is low in us wants to make us animal. To be admitted into the society of the spirits that were perfect from the beginning, seems to be the most appropriate reward. To be admitted to the vision of God Himself is due only to the possession of gifts in our soul, that are in us directly through the indwelling of the Holy Ghost.

We find this hope of an admission into the spirit-society even where the hope of attaining God's vision does not exist; there is indeed a school of non-Christian philosophers, to whom supreme happiness is the contemplation or vision of what they call the *formæ separatæ*, 'the beings free from matter'.



They understand with the Christian philosopher that the effort of the ascetic, who strives against the lust of the body, in order to be spiritual, must be crowned with the vision of, and unveiled intercourse with the most perfect amongst spirits.

Christian theology has raised the best instincts of human reason into an article of faith; for it is not a mere opinion, it is an article of faith, that man's recompense will be life unending with the Angels.

There is, of course, something higher than that, which will be given to man: the vision of God. There will be joys lower than that, as for instance those joys that come to the glorified body. All the same it remains true to say, that the human soul, as soul, is primarily destined to enter into the Angelic society. This is due to it for keeping itself spotless from the world. 711.127

We shall do well to consider how much our Lord insists on this aspect of the question.

'For he that will save his life shall lose it, and he that shall lose his life for my sake shall find it.' *mat. 16*

'For what does it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul? Or what exchange shall a man give for his soul?'

‘For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of his Father with his Angels, and then will he render to everyman according to his work.’

An Angel is greater than the material World with all its glories; so is the soul, if it but understand its dignity. But if it degrades itself, to possess the world, the Angel scorns it; and whither shall it go, if the scorn of the Angels is upon it? The world which it tried to grasp will not satisfy its hunger; it was made for the Angels; woe then to it, if it does not find the Angels.

‘He that shall overcome, shall then be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot his name out of the Book of life, and I will confess his name before my Father and his Angels’ (Apoc. iii. 5).

‘For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of man also will be ashamed of him, when he shall come in the glory of his Father with the holy Angels’ (Mark viii. 28).

‘And I say to you: Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the Angels of God. But he that shall deny me before men, shall be denied before the Angels of God’ (Luke xii. 8 9).

Here then, and in the preceding passages, our Blessed Lord identifies eternal loss with exclusion from the Angelic society. Not to be amongst the Angels is for the soul failure to arrive at its natural goal.

It will be a bitter thing for the human soul to have lost God; but this great and useless regret will leave room for another despair, incomparably keen — that of having been rejected by the Angels for whom the soul was primarily made.

It is a common opinion amongst theologians that the elect of the human race are destined to take the place of the fallen Angels. In what way this happens it would be difficult for us to define.

This could hardly be understood otherwise than of the exclusively supernatural gifts; in other words, the elect of the human race are destined to possess those revelations of God's Countenance, that were meant for the spirits that fell.

We must bear in mind, however, that there is no theological tradition that limits the number of the elect from the human race to the number of 'empty thrones', left vacant through the fall. Nor would it be theologically wise to say that man's admission into the Angelic society comes through

the fall of the proud spirits. It is in the very essence of the human soul that we must look for the origin of that exaltation.

What we have said in a previous chapter, concerning the spirit's remoteness from matter, will make us careful when we try to represent to our own mind the way in which we expect to take up our abode amongst the heavenly spirits.

It is evidently something that is all of the spirit. Local abiding amongst them is out of the question; it is merely metaphor.

How then shall we be made the fellow-citizens of the blessed spirits?

There is one way only: a share in their knowledge, and also in their ways of knowing. We shall know what the Angels know, and also we shall know it in the manner that is their own.

This is why our masters in sacred doctrine are unanimous in teaching that before we receive the vision of God, we have the Angelic knowledge.

'But they that shall be accounted worthy of that world and of the resurrection from the dead, shall neither be married nor take wives; neither can they die any more, for they are equal to the Angels,



and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection' (Luke xx. 35 36).

Equality with the Angels must necessarily mean intellectual equality, as all the attributes of spirits are intellectual, or connected with the intellect.

Thus it will be possible for the elect to converse with the Angels in 'their own tongue'. The question might be mooted how the human mind is made to possess this knowledge, so far superior to its own plane.

St. Thomas thinks that it is in the power of the heavenly spirits themselves to communicate it to the human spirit.

God, and God alone can give Beatific Vision; but it would be a great limitation to the Angelic powers, if the communication of their own science were not left to them.

I must note, however, that the mode in which Angelic knowledge is given to the elect soul, is not a matter of such absolute certainty, as is the fact of such a possession. We may, if we choose, hold the view that the human intellect is raised to the Angelic plane by a direct act of God.

The first view, however, ought to commend itself more to the philosopher's mind, as secondary causes

ought to be credited with as much activity as possible; for God shows forth His power in making His creatures powerful.

Where is the tongue to sing worthily the blessedness of this part of our eternity! 'Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice; for they shall have their fill.'

Not a shadow of error, not a vestige of ignorance, not the faintest sign of injustice, through all that mighty spiritual World!

And all that, after escaping from a world steeped in mendacity, error, prejudice, where gigantic lies and monstrous injustices make the life of the children of God a burden. Let it be of little account to be misunderstood by this adulterous generation! Our judges will be the 'holy Angels of God'.

There is one more consideration which finds its natural place here: Numerous as the Angels are, they are not a crowd, but a hierarchy, both in knowledge and love. Consequently, they all will enter into our lives, be part of it, and contribute towards the fulness of it.

With mankind, we feel daily more and more how man is not part of his fellow-man; how the generality of men are nothing to us, have no share in

our lives. They come and go, and we remain as if they had never existed. Not so in that World where we shall be equal to the Angels.

As hierarchy is part of their nature, to be with one means to be with all of them.

This is the way in which we came, through the Blood of Christ, 'to Mount Sion, and to the city of the Living God, the Heavenly Jerusalem, and to the company of many thousands of Angels (Hebr. xii. 22).

## CHAPTER XLVIII.

### Guardian Angels.

Belief in the constant presence with, and the unceasing watch-fulness over the child of man, on the part of a celestial spirit, was bound to make the fortune of Christian art.

From earliest childhood we have been familiarised with paintings or anyhow pictures, on which a youth, with a beauty not of this world, walks majestically and recollectedly at the side of his human *protégé*.

It is always a gain to our faith if we succeed in finding the true doctrinal and theological meaning of the symbolisms that were the food of our childish

minds. I, for one, consider that with many men their faith has become uninteresting to them, because they have not grown out of the metaphor, the imagery of it, into a rational understanding. In everything else, their mind has become a man's mind; they have put away the things of a child. In matters of Faith alone, they still are bound to speak as a child, to understand as a child, with the result that Faith has become insipid to their virile minds. Happy are they, if their unripe imaginings do not expose their faith to the attacks of the unsparing reasonings of clever infidelity.

It is said of a modern English agnostic of a very militant type, that the only Christianity he ever knew was the one he knew at the age of five. All his virulence is directed against the childhood Christianity which alone he had learned.

We will try now to give what I may call a man's view of the doctrine of Angelic guardianship, which will be simply the theological view, as we find it in the writings of our Theologians.

There are perhaps few impressions that render a given doctrine more insipid to the mature mind, than the impression that there is absolute dis-



proportion between means and end, in the would-be spiritual facts embodied in the doctrine.

Thus in the present instance, the thought of one mighty spirit, spending his existence in watching over the details of an insignificant human life, seems to include such a disproportion between means and end. One does not send for a giant, to pick up straws.

Then there is a suspicion that the unceasing presence of a spirit of untiring activity might take away all human responsibility, if the spirit-*rôle* is at all to be taken *au sérieux*. Why not abandon oneself blindly to a guide in whom power and knowledge are practically unlimited?

The Christian, who follows up logically his faith in the celestial tutorship, need only hope and pray, and leave action and execution to the spirit who from his position is the main partner in the business of life. Such an objection might be formulated with a good deal of plausibility.

The expression that Angels, or at least Guardian Angels, have been created for the benefit of man, has to be understood in the meaning which we attach to an analogous expression, that God became Man for the sake of man. We do not make man,

or mankind, the end for which God became Incarnate. God Incarnate is infinitely greater than mankind, and the *raison d'être* of Him could never be man; He Himself is the end of His own existence, of His own Incarnation, and He is also the end of man, or mankind.

The redeemed and sanctified human individual is redeemed and sanctified precisely with a view to make him worthy of the God Incarnate. The profit of our Redemption is this, that we should be in a fit state to glorify the God Incarnate, and have Him for our ultimate end. Otherwise Redemption would not have been a raising up of the *massa humana*.

The most useful way in which God could become Man for man's sake, was to make Himself, as God-Man, the end of man.

So with the Angels, versus the children of Adam. If we insist at all on the use of the apparently utilitarian phrase that Angels were created for us, let us understand it in a way that will be of the fullest advantage for us.

Their protective and guiding action has essentially and exclusively one aim, one purpose: to make us worthy of them, worthy to be their fellow-citizens

one day. If they are at all to be said to have been made for us, they have been made to be the objects of our everlasting contemplation, of our unending joy, of our peace in their beauty.

Their external, temporary action on us, around us, should be considered as a means; they themselves would be the end; their solicitude over us is so vigilant precisely because we are intended to be their companions.

But we need not use at all the phrase, that Angels have been made for us. "Man has been made for the Angels", though less familiar to our ears, would be a vast deal truer.

Every human being has been entrusted to the care of an Angel; this is an article of faith. Christian tradition has it that no two human beings are entrusted to the same spirit. This of course must be understood of two human beings who are completing their earthly pilgrimage at the same time. The reason for this exclusive guardianship—one man, one Angel—could never be deficiency in Angelic power or knowledge to take care of many at the same time. This would be derogatory to spirit-activity.

The reason must be looked for in the moral relationship which such intimacy and union, as is included in the Angel's guardianship, is intended to establish for ever, between man and his Angel. This kind of loving appropriation on the part of the spirit of one out of the human family, does not mean, in theology, exclusion of any other sort of activity, in other spheres, at the same time, according to the power and order of the Angel. (I do not speak here of that holiest and highest of the Angel's activities, to behold the Face of the Father that is in Heaven, without ceasing. I speak of activity here as meaning influence on some other creature.) Nor does it mean constant and unceasing presence.

We know what Angelic presence implies. A spirit is present, is there, because he acts on the material, the human being; if he ceases acting, he is already departed, back into the infinitely distant spirit-world.

On the other hand, his will, his inward determination to act, has already made him present again. Constancy, permanence of guardianship, according to St. Thomas, is preserved through this instantaneous approach, from the spirit-world, pro-



vided the spirit be never without a full knowledge of all that concerns his charge. St. Thomas does not speak of constant, unceasing action; therefore he does not admit unceasing local presence, as the one follows from the other. All that St. Thomas requires, to make the guardianship unceasing, is continuous thought in the Angel's intellect concerning his ward.

Distance does not exist for spirits.

Three things would thus constitute the office of the *Guardian Angel*: first, an intimate and entire knowledge of the human person under his care; this knowledge goes beyond what an Angel is enabled to know of created things generally; it is the knowledge of the secrets of the heart of that individual person. By ordinary Angelic laws the secrets of the heart are not known.

In the second place, there is determination in the Angel's will to assist, to help, whenever it is necessary, or merely useful.

Thirdly, there is the action itself, on, or about the person, which constitutes the presence.

Nor is the doctrine that no two Angels are of equal rank, forgotten here. The Guardian Angels do not constitute, as it were, one common family

of Angels; they are merely the spirits that constitute the Angelic World, everyone more important in that World, for its completeness, than is any star in the stellar world.

“There is no reason”, says the Angelic Doctor, “why an angel should not have the care of a human being, though he be superior to another Angel, on whom he exerts spiritual influences as on an inferior”.

We have said already that to watch over a member of the human family does by no means exhaust the Angel's activity, even at one and the same time. Nor would it necessarily mean a preference, a privilege, for man, to be under the care of a higher spirit. The preference, the privilege would consist in the amount of activity of any given spirit with his charge.

These theological considerations make the doctrine of Guardian Angels, one full of dignity, capable of appealing to the severest and most exact mind.

But there is another idea, familiar to St. Thomas, which ought not to be left out, and which contributes largely towards the majesty of that dogma, which might be called at the same time the dogma of the Christian nursery. In order to give satis-

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faction to our intellect, which seems to loathe the thought of a celestial prince being tied to the service of a mortal man, St. Thomas repeats with great insistence that this is a question of what is transitory, and what is everlasting. The soul is everlasting, whilst everything else is transitory, however vast and extensive it may be. Therefore, the human soul is worthy of the attention of a spirit, even of the highest rank.

I daresay most people would find it at least a beautiful thought to suggest that God has appointed one of the Heavenly Powers to watch over the destinies of the British Empire; and they would sneer at the Catholic tradition of "one man, one Angel". Yet the British Empire is something merely temporal; the soul of the one man is eternal!

Catholic Spiritism, if we may use this term for Catholic theology on spirits, far from degenerating into a dabbling with the Unseen, renders man more simple in faith, which is of things that are not seen. Moreover, it makes him realise his own responsibilities, far from making of the "Spirits" the "agents" of one's pet desires.

These thoughts are in their place here, where we have to consider the nature of the action our

Guardian Angel exerts concerning each one of us. Our masters in Sacred Doctrine make Angelic action begin there, where human resources fail, and there only.

We may first mention that part of the Angel's activity that is outside us, keeping possible dangers from us, which a higher intellect only could foresee; or bringing about circumstances that will make for our ultimate happiness, and which it will take a genius that is more than human, to arrange. Of the Angel's opposition to the powers of darkness I speak in another chapter. This too is a field of activity which requires more than flesh and blood. But I come to the more human part of the question, that part which deals with what is inside us.

The Angel finds there, in our mind and in our own heart, room enough for activity which he alone can supply.

Three functions may be ascribed to him: To give our thoughts a new train, in speculative things; to help us to decide prudently in particular matters, where decision is required, and no hard and fast rules are available; to alter the disposition of our lower appetites, when they are set against the Divine good.



All these three effects require an outside agent, or, anyhow, may be produced by an outside agent, without lightening in the least the burden of personal responsibility on the part of man.

Before proceeding, there is one very important consideration, deserving of our attention. St. Thomas makes the Angel's power in the interior life of man dependent on the pre-existing disposition of the senses, high and low. The Angel cannot act directly on the pure intellect, nor can he touch the will. He must make use of the senses and of previous sensitive acquisitions, which he finds in man.

It is thus he reaches the intellect. Modern spiritism, in as much as there is reality in it, will bear out this law of spirit-activity on man. This alone would suffice to safeguard man's liberty, under the action of his Angelic protector. The spirit makes use only of what is offered to him by man's moral state.

There is the following threefold gradation adopted by our masters. First, God alone is able to touch directly the will, and the intellect, either in Angels or in men. Secondly, a created spirit in a state of pure immateriality, is able to touch directly the

intellect of another created spirit, in the same state of immateriality. Thirdly, an Angel cannot touch directly the intellect not yet in a state of pure immateriality, as is the state of the human intellect during the present life. He has to approach it through the senses. The reason is obvious: we ourselves receive all our knowledge through the observation of our senses, and our intellectual life is closely linked together with our sense-life. Even an Angel has to conform to the laws of the nature with which he is dealing.

It is a universal axiom with all theologians that God alone is able to touch directly, and handle, as it were, a created free will. It is one of the exclusive and incommunicable privileges of the Godhead. Created agencies may persuade, may entice, as it were; the Almighty alone can enter into the innermost recesses of created volition and change it.

St. Thomas gives the reason of this exclusive power of God on created volition. It is perfectly simple, and easy to follow. An act of volition would not be an act of volition, if it were not essentially a following of the will's own desire, own inclination, own bent. It is the will's nature to follow its own dictates, as its own. Now, when

an outside agent is said to change the will, it implies this: the outside agent must make the will follow the new inclinations as coming from itself, i. e. from the free will, otherwise it would not be an act of the will.

How could it be an act of the will, if it were not a following of its own bent?

This then supposes that the nature of the will itself has been changed. For it could not follow a new bent as its own, unless it had been made such as to have this new bent.

Now God alone, who is the Maker of natures, can alter them.

Therefore God alone can alter a created will.

We must bear in mind, when reading this Scholastic argumentation, that it is all about the purely spiritual will, where there is freedom of election.

These considerations need not be looked upon as a digression. They belong to the very heart of the matter, i. e. Angelic influence on man. They help us in the mapping out of the field of that influence, either good or evil; for many of the views expressed here hold good for the influence of the evil spirit on man, though for the present,

we speak of good influences only. The remarks made just now make it clear, not only that human responsibility is not superseded by Angelic assistance, but also that there is left an immense sphere in man, for the directly Divine action. In his action, the Guardian Angel is respectful both of man's and of God's share in our mental and moral working.

But to come back now to what are the Angel's proper spheres within us, we said first that he may be the originator of a new train of thoughts, that will lead to what is good.

We all know from experience what it is to have our mind put, as it were, on a new track. We shall find in most cases that the new suggestion comes from something that is not ourselves; it is human speech, oral or written; it is some external fact. Looking back, we feel thankful to the man, or the book, or the event, that made our former thoughts leave their groove, and started us on a new way of thinking.

Thus a business-man may owe his success to a new way of thinking of the things of his trade, that came to him casually, it would seem, but certainly from the outside. What I say is this:



without excluding such inferior influences, or origins of new thoughts, or trains of thought, according to Catholic theology, there is a spirit that has been appointed to be to us a source of new lights. We all have to confess to a constant tendency of particularising all our thoughts into one specific channel; it comes from the limitation of our nature. The heavenly spirit that is our partner in the business of life is made just the other way; his views embrace everything, at every moment; his is a most mobile knowledge, not crystallised into any particular shape; he makes us think new thoughts. This has a most universal application; it is true of the purely supernatural, as well as the natural, the temporal.

The Angel of God gives the victorious idea to the general on the battlefield, and makes the recluse think of better things for his own soul.

As we have said, no influence could stand less in the way of human initiative and responsibility than the one just described.

We have mentioned practical decision in everyday life, as the second sphere of the Angel's operation. Here too the Angel stands in no one's way, and

his presence is indispensable, if our life is to be a success in the eyes of God.

St. Thomas remarks very wisely that even when all virtues have been infused into the soul by God, liberally and plentifully, and have made man perfect, the virtue of prudence would make a higher, an external assistance necessary.

Prudence has to deal with facts about which there are no *a priori*, no universal rules. To know what is best, in a given case, is to all purposes, guess-work, for the holiest, and wisest, and most experienced. We want a counsellor, and we do not feel that his advice is an intrusion, a curtailing of our freedom, of our initiative and of our responsibility.

Theology pronounces the Angel that keeps us to be the born adviser and counsellor of man, in things that have no other rule than their endless variability.

Finally, there are our passions, our moods, our obstinacies, coming from confirmed antipathies. These are mouldings of our lower appetites. The will, or spirit-will as we may call it, falls an easy prey to them. We do in a passion what we shall regret when the storm of the irate appetites is over.

It is the most fertile source of our moral falls. The appetites, that ought to be under us, are allowed to overpower us. Here, too, we know what important changes are brought about by things that are outside us; how the wrath of even an Achilles vanishes before a fair smile; how the stroke of a gentle hand is as oil on the troubled waters.

Nothing ought to convince us so firmly of the truth that Catholic theology is the most human of teachings, as the fact that in it the Angel of God is considered as the born appeaser of man's rebellious appetites, through psychic influences of an infinitely delicate nature.

Such then is the gift of God to human nature. Like all Divine gifts, it may be hidden for ever in a napkin, and it may be made to produce a hundredfold. What we have said of the inaccessibility of free will, together with that necessity under which the spirit is to make use only of those dispositions which he finds in man, is the explanation of failure in results.

To some minds it may be a grievous doctrinal difficulty that, with such high spirit-protection, over every human individual, so few human lives should

be a success, morally; they may think the theory of Angelic guardianship untenable on that score. But one might as well, then, doubt God's constant action and presence in the human soul; there too, the results are not in keeping with what I might call God's expenditures.

But all we want for the universal laws of the moral order, for the world-wide provisions of Providence is this: they are at the command of whosoever is willing to make use of them. Man is constantly ill-using his own beautiful nature, his own glorious faculties; yet his nature is left to him; any day he chooses, he may make it the instrument of saintship.

So likewise, he may ignore for ever, and render ineffectual, the Angelic partnership; but the day he is resolved to turn it to good account, he will find it to be a mine of hidden moral wealth. Man may make evil use of the Angelic partnership, as he does of the World in which he lives.

One more practical consideration before concluding this chapter: Would it not seem strange that one should be actually incapable of ever detecting whether a fresh idea, an advice, a good movement, comes from the Angel of God? Yet such is the



hard fact. We never pretend to know that we have been led to any particular conclusion by the Angel of God. And yet all the time we have to look on him as the one moving power that matters. In this we have a noticeable instance of what I may call the soundness and healthiness of Catholic spiritism.

It would be a serious loss to our moral life, in fact it would be its cessation, if we did not decide anymore for ourselves, think for ourselves; if we had within us, clearly and distinctly, the thinking, the decision of someone else; it would lower us to mere automata.

Such is the subtlety, the thoroughness of those blessed spirits, that they make their own suggestions to appear to us as our own thoughts; or better, they make them to be our own thoughts, our own impressions, for which we shall get the glory, the good renown before God and man.

Amongst men, a clever adviser will so insinuate his own views into the mind of another man whom he controls, as to make that mind look on the new thought as coming from its own hidden chambers. Angelic advice and movement is of that sort. To know whether the illumination comes from

the Angel of God is a secondary matter. The important thing is to be in such a state, morally, as to be fit for receiving Angelic influences.

And we know with clearness, what is necessary, at any time of our life, to be in that state.

## CHAPTER XLIX.

### Guardian Angels.

#### Additional Considerations.

St. Thomas speaks of the appointing of a heavenly spirit, to be the exclusive guardian of a particular human being, as the practical application of Divine Providence with regard to man.

Providence or the guiding vigilance of the Creator over His creature, is part of Nature's course. God would not be a wise Creator if He left the creature all to its own resources; now St. Thomas implies this, that Providence is not a direct act of God, but an intermediary act.

The direct and immediate executive powers of Providence are the celestial spirits; they are, so to speak, Providence in practice; and therefore they become one of the main factors in the World's course. We can never give too great prominence to the Scholastic principle that God never does

through Himself, what may be achieved through created causality. It would be quite within the spirit of Catholic theology to say that for any result which does not require actually infinite power, God will sooner create a new spiritual being, capable of producing that result, than produce it Himself. Now it is certainly a very remarkable fact that the Fall of man, whatever changes it may have brought about in his relationship to the spiritual World, has not interfered in the least with that close connection of the individual human being with one of the heavenly powers; and no less remarkable is this, that our masters cannot think of any human individual so sunk in evil, as to be forsaken for ever by his Guardian Angel.

Catholic tradition has it, that Anti-Christ, being the man of sin, will be the most criminal of human beings that ever lived; and therefore our masters asked themselves the question, whether even Anti-Christ will have a Guardian Angel; in order to emphasise the extent of the doctrine, they take an extreme case.

Of course their answer is invariably in favour of an Angel being the guide even of Anti-Christ; for even he, says St. Thomas, owing to the presence of the bright spirit, will do less harm, through the

fact of the Angel being there, than if he were left to himself.

All this goes to show, that we are here face to face with a great moral law of creation, admitting of no exception, universal, unending in its applications and its resourcefulness. It is not the effect of a special Providence, a Providence of privilege; for whatever was special Providence, was lost through the Fall. It may therefore be safely asserted that man is simply incapable of attaining his spiritual end, without the co-operation of his Guardian Angel; that co-operation is as absolute a necessity, as are the physical laws that maintain his bodily life.

The doctrine of Guardian Angels is not primarily a devotional doctrine, something given purposely to foster piety and spiritual life, not more than the doctrine of God's constant presence within our being, though of course it may be a fruitful source of devotional feeling. We simply live on it and live through it, if we live at all; but like other doctrinal facts, not primarily devotional, as for instance Creation, it may become for the individual soul, as it were, a private revelation, if that soul gives it its special attention; and it



may have for that soul all that reality of meaning which it was first intended to have for everyone. It would be the place here to consider the Guardian Angel's rôle with man, in the state of innocence; for man in that happy state of perfect moral and intellectual integrity has his Guardian Angel. According to theology, man's endowments even then were not such as to render superfluous the tutelage of a higher spirit.

It might be said, of course, that the Angel was to Adam like a friend making happier the state of happiness; but this is not exactly the mission of the Guardian Angel, who must be essentially a protector against danger, and who, even in the state of primeval integrity, was a necessary help to man, in a province where man alone would not have been equal to the circumstances.

St. Thomas, with what I may call great theological candour, simply says, that the protection was necessary even then against the action of the fallen angels.

I daresay there is hardly anything in Catholic theology, less popular with the modern mind, than the idea of a perfectly innocent creature, as primeval man is supposed to have been, being surrounded

by hosts of spiritual enemies, of much keener natures than his own. How did they come in, is a question that naturally arises; there seems to be a certain unfairness in such a condition.

Unfairness of condition there could not be, through the very fact of there being an Angel given to man, to counteract the spirit of darkness. As the state of innocence is the one state God purposely designed for man, all provisions, and graces for the benefit of man are seen, in that state, in their proper proportion and rôle; therefore, it must be said that whatever new duties the Guardian Angel took on himself, for the sake of man, through the Fall, the natural, congenial, I might almost say, the adequate work or rôle of the Guardian Angel is to resist the evil spirit that besets man; for such, and such alone was his rôle in Paradise.

This will, of course, lead up to a conclusion which will be rather unexpected for many minds, i. e. that the fallen spirits have, in this world of ours, where man has to live, a naturally impregnable position, and, as it were, a prior reason to be there; for only with that point in view, can we understand the necessity of Angelic protection. Catholic theology has no difficulty in admitting this priority of oc-

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cupation of the earth, by the fallen spirits; it may be a mystery, but it is not a contradiction to any known laws of right and wrong.

We may mention briefly what may be called the Protestant objection to the doctrine of Guardian Angels. It is a part of Protestant mentality to feel worried and annoyed, at what is called "the being that stands between man and God". Why should we depend on the secondary activities of an Angel, and not receive the gift straight from God? But this objection, if carried to its logical extent, would make Nature itself not only superfluous, but burdensome, because many things do come to us through the workings of Nature which after all it would be in the power of God to distribute directly.

The Protestant mind mistakes exclusiveness for immediateness; it thinks, that man is near to God, because there is nothing but God. The Catholic view, on the contrary, is that the greatest and highest communication of God is communication of Causality. Not only is He the cause of all things and of all good, but He makes His creatures to be, in their respective degrees, causes of things, and causes of good; and in our metaphysics, as well as in our piety, we go by this principle, that

the highest creature is also the most powerful creature, and that the more God loves a spiritual being, the more means He gives to that being of doing good to others.

That goodness is communicative of itself, is a deep Scholastic principle, and the more goodness there is in a spiritual being, the more it gives of itself. In fact a creature, without its respective powers of causality, most likely implies contradiction.

## CHAPTER L.

### On Angelic Intellectual Life.

There is perhaps no phenomenon that strikes a thoughtful mind more forcibly than the absolute disproportion between human knowledge and the things that make up the World. The World is immense; wherever we go we find new things, and man knows so little about it, that it always is and always will be a sealed book; he may behold the cover of the book and may even count the number of seals, but as to reading it! So evidently, the World is much vaster than the human mind, at least in its present state.

Now we may put the question like this: Is it always and everywhere the case, that the things



that are, should be greater and more numerous than the things that are known? Will it always be, that a vast part of the World is beyond created knowledge, is unfathomable for created knowledge? Or is it not rather the ordinary state of things, that created knowledge should precede the created things, should be commensurate with the things and, if anything, should be superior to the things? So that the knowing of the things should be in a way more important than the existing of the things. The generic term 'thing' used here stands for every sort of entity that is not a spiritual entity itself, and which therefore has no knowledge of its own existence.

It would hardly be a satisfactory solution to say that God knows the things He created and therefore knowledge ranks prior to existence.

The knowledge God has of the work of His own hands could be no satisfactory *raison d'être* for the existence of so much that is not known by us. For it is a case of *created* knowledge, versus the *created* unknown.

Catholic theology has boldly taken up the attitude expressed in the second possibility, that knowledge is prior to and more important than the

existence of the thing; that whatever receives existence at the hands of God is made first an object of new contemplation to a created mind, so that the normal state is this: more knowledge than existing things; the opposite state is an exceptional state. St. Thomas lays down this proposition: whatever God does, in the natural order of things, He first makes it known to the created immaterial spirit. This may be considered as the Scholastic principle of Angelic cognition.

We may adopt this principle with perfect confidence. It may at first sight look unphilosophic, unworthy of great metaphysicians. Man has to find the few treasures of Nature which he is able to find, by the sweat of his brow; he that adds to science, adds to labour, and an *a priori* possession of all knowledge, as a natural gift, in-born, without any labour, might seem to be a kind of spiritual or intellectual fairy-tale. Yet we might as well be surprised at seeing the world exist without any laborious process of its own, as to hear that there are minds made in such a wise as to have a perfect and full cognisance of everything that is. With our masters, then, let us simply admit the following theory:

A spirit comes into existence with the knowledge of all material, created things, and their laws and the results of the laws, *in infinitum*. There is no less difficulty in admitting the existence of such a complex Universe as we see, than in admitting perfect knowledge of it in a created mind. Both come equally from the hands of God.

Besides this, every spirit is born with a clear view of every other spirit, in things that are not free will; but the lower spirit is not capable of understanding the higher spirit with the same vividness with which the higher spirit understands his own nature.

The proposition here laid down admits of no exception. Whatever God does to build up the Universe, he first produces the idea and image of it in the Angelic mind. The lost spirit is not deprived of this action of God, on the created intellect. It is not grace, it is nature; and nature has not been diminished in the lost spirit.

This is what our masters mean to express by saying that spirits receive their knowledge, not from the thing that is, but receive it directly from God.

We need not enter here into a controversy as to whether the knowledge of all these things is an

attribute of their nature, or whether God by a direct act fills their intellect with science. All we need grasp here is that absolute "a-prioriness" of Angelic cognition.

There is one vast section of things that has a unique character and, speaking humanly, is an exceptionally difficult problem for both Divine and Angelic knowledge, I mean the acts of the free will in the spirit and in man. They are free, because they are not necessarily pre-contained in any cause. For if they were pre-contained in any cause, they would be no longer free.

Any natural phenomenon that happens, say in the centre of the earth, is infallibly pre-contained in some laws, in some elements; and the knowledge of the law and the element would enable a mind to foresee its happening. My free act of to-morrow is not so pre-contained in any law or element, even spiritual.

This is why it is free. That God knows such acts, is a matter of Faith; even instinct would establish the doctrine of His knowing it. How He knows it, or, as theologians say, His medium of knowing it, as they are not His own free acts, is the one difficulty that has divided theologians into



two great camps, commonly called Thomists and Molinists.

What we have to consider here is this, that no created nature, however perfect, could be made such as to find itself the medium of knowing one single act of free will of another free creature. Whatever is free act, in the creature, or the result of free act, the Angel knows only as far as God reveals it to him. About the extent of that revelation to any particular spirit, we have no certain data to go by.

Everything would point to a liberal manifestation on the part of God of acts of free will, either present or future.

There is no contradiction in the idea of a spirit, though he be but a finite and created being, having, through the operation of God, knowledge of an infinite number of created things, or acts of the created free will. It is a matter of theological certainty that the human soul of our Lord had such a knowledge of an infinitely long series of free acts, as He knows all the deeds and thoughts of all creatures, angelic and human that ever will exist.

The universal rule for what might be called the amount of knowledge of these free acts is laid down by St. Thomas: whatever belongs in any way,

to any spirit, and has any relation to him, he is made to know it, through the act of God.

God is as present in the spiritual intellect, and as constantly at work there, as He is in the innermost part of every creature, where He works incessantly to keep it in existence.

There seems to be a close relation between God's action in the Angelic intellect and God's action in every creature, called Conservation, and which is Creation continued. One follows from the other, and they both are of the natural order of things.

Here we may speak of a subject, on which our masters in theology have said much; a most abstruse, and difficult subject it is, and they all declare it to be one of the hardest problems in divinity. It is a problem too, which, unless handled by a master-mind, might easily become an object of ridicule. It is *locutio angelica*, "the speech of the Angel". How do angels or spirits generally communicate? That they do communicate, is proved by Scripture, without mentioning the fact that it is precisely what we should expect spirits to do.

They could not be a hierarchical world, without communication or speech. But how do they communicate their thoughts, we shall ask ourselves over

and over again. What method have they of transmitting their thoughts into the mind of another spirit? If we remember all that has been said about the nature of a spirit and about the "a-prioriness" of all his knowledge, these interrogations will become the more perplexing, the more we think.

The answer of St. Thomas, however, is very simple and very dignified. It comes to this: A spirit intends effectually to communicate his own thought to another spirit; the thought of the speaking spirit belongs from the very fact of that intention and direction to what might be called the sphere of the spirit addressed; and the spirit thus addressed knows it, as he knows every free act, that has any relation to him. We cannot go beyond this very simple theory of St. Thomas.

Useless to repeat here that there is no such thing as distance for spirits; and even, if there be distance, it is no obstacle to direct and immediate communication of thought.

All this, of course, is true of the human spirit, in the state of separation from the body; and also in the state of the reunion with the body, as in the resurrection, the soul animates the body not as soul, but as spirit, as we said in chapter 44.

## CHAPTER LI.

## On the Number of Angels.

It is an article of Faith that the number of Angels created by God is exceedingly great. There has been no official pronouncement of Pope or universal Council on the subject, it is true. But the doctrine has always been so popular, so common, that the official pronouncement was never wanted, to make it an article of faith. Angels are innumerable; the mind of man, that is to say, our mind, in its present state, could not count them off one by one, and get to the end.

In fact, the number of Angelic spirits has always been considered as one of the marvels of God's Power that baffle the minds of men.

We know, of course, that it could not be infinite; an actually infinite crowd of beings seems to involve metaphysical contradiction. There is one Angel that is first, and there is another Angel that is last. But a successive counting of them will not reach that last one; those that see them all, have to see them simultaneously.

All this we may grant easily. Nature, such as it is before our eyes, has habituated us with the



numberless. It is an indispensable notion in science. Yet, in this case, a difficulty, of a metaphysical order, arises, which makes the Angelic numberlessness something quite new, something unique, something to create mental irritation, even there where natural, physical numberlessness is a familiar notion.

The numberless of Nature are invariably beings of the same species, powers or elements of the same kind, always of the class that might be called the infinitely small. They become irresistible powers precisely through their numberlessness.

Not so with the Angels.

Everyone of them is a being perfect in beauty, power and wisdom. Every one of them represents, as it were, a spiritual sphere or plane of his own, not shared by any other spirit.

Nature's infinitely small beings borrow strength from accumulation without measure. Their multiplicity makes them into a power. But with the Angels, everyone is one of Nature's virtues, one of Nature's powers.

Therefore, we have to find an explanation for Angelic infinitude, which must differ radically from the explanations we have for physical innumerability,

though the second may familiarise us with, and prepare us, for the first.

Why then are Angels so numerous, when we know that everyone of them is a vaster thing in the spiritual order, than the one preceding him?

The end God has in view, in His Creative Act, is to manifest Himself. This He does in giving existence to numberless spiritual beings, all differing in their attributes.

As we have said already, the material, bodily creation is not the image of God; the spirit alone is God's image, in truth and reality. With material beings, multiplication of beings is, I might say, of a utilitarian, provisional character, to bring about certain great physical results, few in number, that are to minister, ultimately, to the spirit.

But it would be preposterous to say that God has multiplied the grains of sand on the seashore, in order that many might express some beauty of His which one grain could not express.

There would be little gained, in point of view of external representation of God's internal perfection, by multiplying beings of absolutely the same kind and species. Number in that case is only useful, not beautiful.

Besides, as already noticed, the very fact of their materiality prevents them from being the image of God.

If therefore Creation means manifestation of God's hidden glories, Angels must all differ, and Angels must be all but infinite in number.

It must be spirits, because spirits alone are truly the image or representation of God.

They must differ, so that one may shadow forth that part of Divine beauty, which the other Angel, through the fact of his finiteness, finds it impossible to shadow forth.

Thirdly, they must be all but infinite in number, if Divine majesty is to be manifested in the creation adequately. God's perfections are infinite in number and extent.

I may therefore express physical and spiritual numberlessness in the following two sentences:

The grains of sand that are on the seashore, are all alike and almost infinite in number, because in their identity of nature and infinity of number they are useful as a barrier to the sea.

The Angels in Heaven all differ, and are almost infinite in number because through infinite variety they become representative of God's beauty.

Why then should we be scandalised if we hear it said that the Angels differ like so many worlds, and yet are more numerous than the grains of sand on the seashore? Which of the two is the more important work: to make a home for the ocean, or to represent adequately, in a created way, the Glory of the Trinity?

One of the first facts that are brought in upon us when we read the Scriptures, and also through all that is most official in the Church, is the distinction of Angels into various categories or choirs. It is commonly said, that there are nine choirs of Angels, because there are only nine mentioned in the Scriptures. This enumeration is not to be found in any particular place, but the names of those sacred choirs are gleaned from all over the sacred books.

The gradation adopted by St. Gregory the Great has certainly great theological value, and it would be, at least, a great temerity to say that those various appellations do not indicate various classes of spirits, or that there is no gradation expressed by them.

It would again be against all theological principles to look on those choirs, as being nine dif-



ferent classes of spirits, class differing from class, but the spirits of the same class being practically identical in perfection. Thus, for instance, we ought not to consider Thrones to be a category of kindred angels, and, as it were, a new species of Angelic spirits resembling each other in their main features.

St. Thomas, who writes long articles on Hierarchical distinctions, and gives the *raison d'être* of these distinctions, could not forget that according to his theology there are not two Angels of equal spirit-rank and that the second Angel is as superior to the first or lowest, as that first is superior to the human soul. The following then is the view which we have to take with St. Thomas, concerning the traditional hierarchical distinctions of the Angels: Every Angel is in himself a full and complete Angelic order (*ordo*), much more, says the Angelic Doctor, than any star, in the material Universe is a centre in itself. Only it is impossible for us, who are so remote from spirit-beings, to understand the cosmic rôle of a spirit, however important. So we have to be satisfied with much vaguer classifications, which take in a wide range of spirits, just as astronomy has to be content with comprehensive

classifications, that divide the Universe into planets and fixed stars and comets and nebulæ, as science is not advanced enough in every case to give the definite function to every unit in the world's gravitation.

The Angelic differentiations are comprehensive and simple enough. They mean, according to our masters, a threefold function: that of giving light, which is the highest function; that of receiving light and giving it again, which is the second or intermediary functions; and that of receiving it, without giving to another Angelic spirit.

## CHAPTER LII.

### On Angelic Illumination.

There is a book written in the early centuries of the Christian era which has left a deep mark on Catholic theology. It is the "Celestial Hierarchy" of Denis Areopagita. The schoolmen gave St. Denis the Athenian, the convert of St. Paul, the credit of its authorship. Modern research is against this authorship; it considers that the book was written about the 5<sup>th</sup> century by a Greek monk. We need not take sides in this controversy, as the influence of the writing is to be attributed not so much to

the author, as to the book itself. It is its theology that has won for it such an important place in the development of Christian doctrine.

As with the *Imitation of Christ*, the author is nowhere; it is the doctrine that won the victory. Few works of the past are quoted so frequently by the schoolmen. It is certainly a most original book and its views truly deserve to be called heavenly, as the mediæval mystics used to call them.

All its doctrines have passed into Catholic theology, and St. Thomas brought his own genius to bear on it, and made it part of his wonderful dogmatic structure. It is there that he found all his teaching concerning *Angelic Illuminatio*, which holds such an important place in his doctrine on the Angels, and also on the human soul.

The main idea then of the old Greek book is this, that the great specific differentiations between the celestial spirits, far from creating distance and separation, are the origin of wonderful communications and spirit-interchanges which make of the spirit-world one harmonious organism. As diversity of rank, from Scripture and Tradition, is evidently the first feature that strikes the theologian, the "Celestial Hierarchy" gives what might be called

the connecting link between all the spirit-ranks. Without this communion, the spirit-world could not be considered to be one great universe. It would be a mere aggregate of mighty beings indeed, but all isolated. The connecting link is the Angelic Illumination.

The idea is this: The highest spirit is through the very height of his nature endowed with vastly more knowledge than the lower spirit. Now the higher spirit gives of his superabundance to the lower spirit, and through that influence of his, makes the lower spirit the participant of his own excellencies, and thus lifts him above his own nature, so that a spirit benefits in some degree by the excellencies of all the spirits that are above him.

It is thus that created causality which is the highest gift of the Creator to the created, finds a scope in the spirit-world. The objection, that comes so frequently to the mind, why does not God do a thing Himself, may be considered here more particularly. Its refutation will be a great gain to our mind.

We suppose here with all theologians that God is as fully and as completely near any spirit of



any rank as the nature of the spirit allows it. We suppose that God's action is exerted to its full extent, so that nothing of God's action is withheld. Thirdly we suppose, that everything in the creature that possibly could go out to God, has gone out to Him. Now when all these conditions are fulfilled, we maintain that there is still something in the created spirit, human or angelic, that may be improved, if such an expression be permissible.

Catholic feeling about the benefit derived from the influence of God's elect on fellow-creatures, in no wise proceeds from a feeling that God does something, but not everything; that He leaves half of the work to the created spiritual agency. No, this is not Catholic doctrine, it is the reverse. When God's action has been in contact with all the points of our being, He can be in contact with, we still feel that there is a created influence that can bring us nearer to God.

So in this matter of Angelic Illumination, no intercourse could be more close and direct, than that between a celestial spirit and God; in all that which is, in any way, a point of contact for God in that spirit, God is there Himself, without any intermediary.

The spirit, on his part, responds to God's approaches whole-heartedly, unreservedly. Yet even after that, according to theology, there is still room for what I have called improvement, in Divine things, through the very fact of the spirit being a separate personality from God, of his being a created, not a Divine nature. A spirit has with a fellow-spirit points of contact and relationships which have exclusively the created for their object, not the Increased.

This then is the office and mission of *Illuminatio Angelica*, that whatever in a spirit is a point of contact for a fellow-spirit, the higher spirit should make use of it, should work on it and through his pure influence should raise it up to God.

This explanation of that duality of relationship, one with God and one with the creature, is a most important thing in every branch of theology, and finds its highest as well as its most necessary application in the state of the eternal and supernatural happiness for Angels and for man, where the vision of God, though full happiness, is not all happiness.

It is through the imparting of knowledge that the Angels of God make the human soul happy, with an additional happiness, and thus they treat it as a brother-spirit.

## CHAPTER LIII.

**Angelic Sin.**

The theology on the fall of Angels is far from being a merely theoretical discussion, a kind of metaphysical luxury, for the keen of mind; on the contrary it is a necessary doctrine, if our Faith has to be such as to be able to give an account of itself. The existence and activities of evil spirits are a practical question, with practical results, both in ascetical and liturgical life.

It is therefore important for us to know how spirits came to be evil spirits. It has, of course, been always a temptation to the human mind, to picture to itself a duality of principles, the good and the evil principle, equally eternal and equally independent, waging war against each other, with equal might, and the war being of thrilling interest precisely because the belligerents are both infinite and omnipotent.

Man's inherent thirst for justice has in most cases preserved him from making of the Evil Principle the final victor. Almost universally, the Good Principle, through some unexpected feat of luck or bravery, is to gain the mastery; and therein lies the tragedy of every existence.

Nothing could be more loathsome to the Catholic mind, than a duality of principles. Whatever might be said to the contrary, the Catholic mind, if it had any unsound tendency, would tend rather towards the complete abolition of any doctrine concerning evil spirits, than towards the admission of an evil principle such as just described.

Our masters have therefore laboured hard to shew, how spirits could become wicked, though they be still full of God's beauty; and their labours have not been in vain. Their teachings concerning the sin of the Angels are a masterpiece of moderation, combined with wonderful intellectual shrewdness.

✓ It is sin, and sin alone, that makes Satan and his angels to differ from Michael and his followers. As St. Thomas points out so shrewdly, a spirit, without that terrible element of personal sin, could never be, by any manner of means, even an indirect cause of suffering to someone else. Amongst the animated bodily creatures, say man, the best and holiest may be, without any guilt, to some one else, a cause or occasion of suffering.

In the lower regions of Nature, the life of one being is the death of another. The wolf feeds on the lamb, though the wolf, be no evil



being, inherently; he is an evil being only to the lamb.

With entirely spiritual beings, from the very fact of all their activities being in a spiritual sphere, there does not exist even that indirect causation of evil or suffering. A spirit through his nature is totally good, in a twofold sense: all that he is in himself is perfect, and all that he does outside himself invariably produces happiness. The wicked intentions therefore, with which the evil spirits are credited by Catholic theology, are due entirely to a deliberate act, for which there was no special propensity in the Angelic nature, i. e. their first sin.

What then is Angelic sin? Theologians are of all men those for whom it is most difficult to believe in evil spirits, because the knowledge the theologian possesses of the nature of a spirit, makes it very difficult for him, to associate sin and Angelic nature in one being. Most men, no doubt, would find it as easy to believe in bad spirits as they believe in bad men, if once they have got themselves to believe in spirits at all. Contrary to what is said sometimes, popular imagination is ready enough to believe in the sin of spirits, because

popular imagination makes of spirits merely a higher kind of changeable beings, like ourselves.

Theology starts with the assumption that spirits are impeccable. But as, through Revelation, spirit-sin is a hard fact, theology is at pains to find how it could possibly come about. "How is it possible", says the theologian, "that the strong did fall?" Nothing in their nature seemed to prepare them for that fall, unless it be the fact of their being finite beings. In their intellect, there can be no error; in their will there can be no passion; they only could desire and crave for spiritual, intellectual riches; now, it is an eternally and invariably good thing to desire and crave for spiritual riches.

It has thus become one of the hardest problems of theology to explain the sin of Angels, and to make, in that matter, reason to find peace and rest in the article of Faith. As a fundamental principle, in which St. Thomas believes firmly, and which he repeats frequently, we may lay down this assertion: a spiritual being like an Angel could never err, intellectually or through his will, if left to his merely natural state.

A spirit as spirit, is simply impeccable; his will is free, but his nature is so perfect as to exclude

even the remotest abuse of free will. But in the supposition of the spirit being raised to a higher state, the supernatural state, both his intellect and his will, as St. Thomas says, are no longer a rule to themselves. In supernatural things their mind and their will have to submit to a higher rule, the rule of God, and there is the possibility of turning away. In the natural state they only need follow the promptings of their nature, to be pure; and the more they follow the promptings of their nature, the purer they are. Therefore they are a rule unto themselves, and whatever they do, must be infallible good. It is, accordingly, in the elevation of the Angel above himself, included in the supernatural state, where the master of sacred theology, St. Thomas, finds the Angel's vulnerable part, a clear proof, that Angelic sin is, so to speak, against the genius of Catholic theology. The objection rises at once to everybody's mind: Why then did God raise them to the supernatural state? I shall say a word or two presently about this.

A dogma of that kind, representing the brightest of spirits, falling from such an intellectual height, was bound to give rise to what might be called theological romance, with now and then a slight tinge of scandal.

Byron had predecessors in some heretics of the first centuries who thought that they had found the key to the fall of the Angels, in Gen vi. 4. Where the scandal-mongers have been silent, the poet has made of Lucifer a hero of rebellion.

It may be said of theology that it abominates both romance and tragedy. It proceeds on high speculative lines, so high indeed, that only a trained theologian is able to follow them.

We will put the matter briefly in the following way, which embodies all our masters have said:

✓ We must bear in mind that great fact which plays such an important rôle in the theology of St. Thomas, that every Angel is a new species, being, as it were, a world to himself, a star in the Angelic world, holding in the Universe a place of singular importance, in fact, being indispensable to the completeness of the Universe. If he were not there, where he is, the World would not be complete; there would be a gap.

This gives the Angel a wonderful singularity of position. There is something incommunicable in it; it makes his greatness and his beauty. And all this he possesses by nature. To love this position of his, to delight in it, to be ever happy



in it, and the thought of its singularity, is not only lawful to him, but it is his very life.

The supernatural on the contrary, the grace of God, or Sanctifying Grace, has this characteristic: it is common to all; it is specifically the same in all, and what is more, it may be possessed by beings far inferior to the Angels, such as man. Specifically the same in all, it may be possessed in various degrees which depend on the dispensation of God, and not on the excellencies of the nature that receives it.

This then was Lucifer's fall: rather than be one of many, through the higher but commoner gift of Sanctifying Grace, he preferred remaining in the singularity of his position and to occupy his natural place as spirit in the Universe.

Thus the spirit wilfully and deliberately placed himself in opposition to the Order of God. It is God's express and unchanging will that every spiritual creature should be raised to the supernatural state, and the spiritual world as a whole not only strives after the supernatural state with all its might, but the supernatural is the principal part in its life, and the natural is only the secondary function.

Therefore the spirit that refused the supernatural, is through his own choice in opposition both to the will of God and to the harmony of the spiritual world. He is essentially an outcast, a lost spirit, radically and fundamentally in opposition to eternal life, which is the grace of God; and herein lies the greatness of his fall.

It must be borne in mind that his spirit-position in the Universe is the same as before. He could not be replaced unless God annihilated him, and created a new spirit. It might be said that Lucifer and his angels got what they wanted, what their intellect had judged to be *their best way of being singular*. With them the loss of a higher good could never be matter of regret, as the very absence of that higher good is the condition of their singularity. That they should possess such singularity with the addition of spiritual sufferings, which are the result of their being deliberately in opposition to the harmony of the Universe, does not make them either capable of or anxious for change, as those sufferings are the direct result of their confirmed determination not to change. As St. Thomas points out so clearly, the fallen spirits have lost none of their intellectual privileges; there

is not the slightest shadow in their mind. Their will, too, is as passionless as before, as remote from things unspiritual as before; the only thing they hate is the grace of God, the supernatural; and if through their suggestion man is tempted to the lowest acts of sensual sinfulness, it is not from a love of sin, but with a view to prevent man from possessing the grace of God, that the fallen spirit tempts.

It has become clear, I hope, how the first sin of the spirit was *pride*, and could be nothing but pride. We apply the word pride to many of our transgressions; but pride properly so called, and as distinct from every other sin, is the love of one's proper excellency in opposition to somebody else's excellencies, because that other excellency would end the singularity of our own excellency.

The great refusal made by Lucifer, of the supernatural life, came from his unwillingness to be in communion with other beings which would have been the loss of his singularity. It is sin, such as man has never known; it is a sin of which man is entirely incapable.

This one sin exceeds in guilt millions of sins committed by man. The energetic and terrible metaphors employed in the Sacred Scripture con-

cerning the fall of Lucifer become more comprehensible through those very cautions of our theology, I have mentioned. If our Lord says that he saw Satan fall from heaven like lightening, it is not stronger than what theology says when it maintains that Satan put himself into a state of opposition to the grace of God.

The preceding argumentations are likewise the best commentary on the frequently used expression that Lucifer coveted to be like unto God. With St. Thomas I say that it would have been absolutely impossible for Satan to have a desire to be God, or equal to God, or to have any of the Divine attributes. Such a pretension is clearly an impossible one. To remain in the singularity of his natural position was an imitation of God's position, who is unique, besides being one.

Jealousy is one of the sins most frequently associated with the fall of the Angels. We must of course exclude the idea of jealousy, as found in man, with whom it is one of the lower passions. Jealousy, with Satan, could only mean spiritual sorrow and opposition at seeing beings lower than himself, such as man, exalted above himself, through the grace of God. Jealousy therefore could not



be the first sin, but could only be the consequence of pride.

There has been a good deal of controversy as to whether the mystery of the Incarnation, manifested to the Angels, in the Light of God, entered to a certain extent into their fall.

This may be granted readily, as it tallies fully with what precedes; for it is chiefly in the mystery of the Incarnation that Lucifer was expected to enter into communion with beings lower than himself.

What I have been at pains to do here is to shew the wisdom, and what I might call the moderation of our theology. One word more to redeem my promise, to explain, why it was better for God to raise Angelic nature to the supernatural state, though this elevation made the spirit vulnerable, and peccable.

God did not lay a snare to the fidelity of the Angels, but through an act of His Omnipotence, He raised created Beauty above itself. Now it would be against God's wisdom, and kindness, to withhold from the world of His beloved spirits the great additional glory of the supernatural state, because some spirits, through their own act, would find in

this elevation their ruin. St. Thomas states expressly that the majority of the Angels remained faithful; nay he seems to consider that the fallen angels are exceptional cases; he gives this deep reason, that things that are against nature happen rarely. Now though to be raised to the supernatural is above the Angelic nature, to rebel against that elevation is against the promptings of the Angelic nature. Therefore God had not to pass by the host of faithful spirits and deprive them of the highest happiness, because His act of liberality would be an occasion of ruin for some.

Before concluding this chapter, I may make a few remarks, with no particular link amongst themselves, except that they will help to elucidate several points touched upon in this chapter. The incorruptibility of mind of the fallen angels is absolute, and to such an extent is this true according to St. Thomas, that neither God nor the good Angels have ceased to communicate to them those lights which belong to the Angelic nature. God works now in their intellects in all things that belong to the natural state of the spirit. The only province about which they are kept in ignorance are the mysteries of divine grace. Those

mysteries are communicated to the good Angels exclusively.

This is why they may be said to be in darkness.

When we speak of the pride of the rebellious spirits, we do not mean and cannot mean an evil habit, an unruly propensity which they had from the beginning and which proved their temptation; nothing of the kind could be in an Angel, as he comes direct from the hand of God. It was all an *act*; the act itself was the pride. The Angel elected his singularity, with the loss of Divine Grace; and this election was his pride. We must represent to ourselves the Angel, the moment before the fall, in what I might call a state of perfect evenness in mind and will, with no bias one way or the other; or if there was bias, it was towards accepting Divine Grace, as he had actual grace to bring about that acceptation.

One might say that no act was ever more reasoned, and more impartially calculated.

When we say here, that some of the spirits refused Sanctifying Grace, we do not mean by it by any means that they had Sanctifying Grace offered to them, and rejected it; it is an article of faith that they were created with Sanctifying Grace, so

that they never existed without it. St. Thomas says that they actually worked with it and merited the Beatific Vision through it; so to speak they fell out of it, which of course makes their opposition to it all the more radical, and their rebellion all the more formidable, as they had tasted its sweetness already.

This is why they may be called apostate spirits, as they fell away from the supernatural state. We must remember that the grace they were granted in their creation was ineffably great, and God alone knows, what treasures of supernatural beauty enriched their minds. Heaven, in connexion with the fall of the angels, could never mean the heaven of the Blessed where God is seen face to face, as there is no falling away from the vision of God. It was a lower kind of heaven, from which they fell.

What is said of the hideousness of the fallen spirits must of course be understood with our highest mind. It is, to put it quite theologically, a constant, unceasing energy to destroy the grace of God, wherever it is to be found.



## CONCLUSION.

In the last chapters of my modest work I have taken the reader up to the highest summits of Catholic theology—Angelic Life.

There is a great craving for spirituality in the hearts of many people; spirituality to them means vitality, endless activity.

The human soul will be the natural companion of the spirits that dwell with God; Angelic Illumination is simply another word for vitality and spiritual activity going on for ever.

There is nothing deeper, nothing kinder, nothing more merciful than Catholic theology on the human soul. It is the oldest and most persevering sentiment, combined with the highest and most exact thought. Even an unbeliever ought to study it for the sheer merit of its power and depth, just as an atheist may travel thousands of miles to see the splendours of St. Peter's.

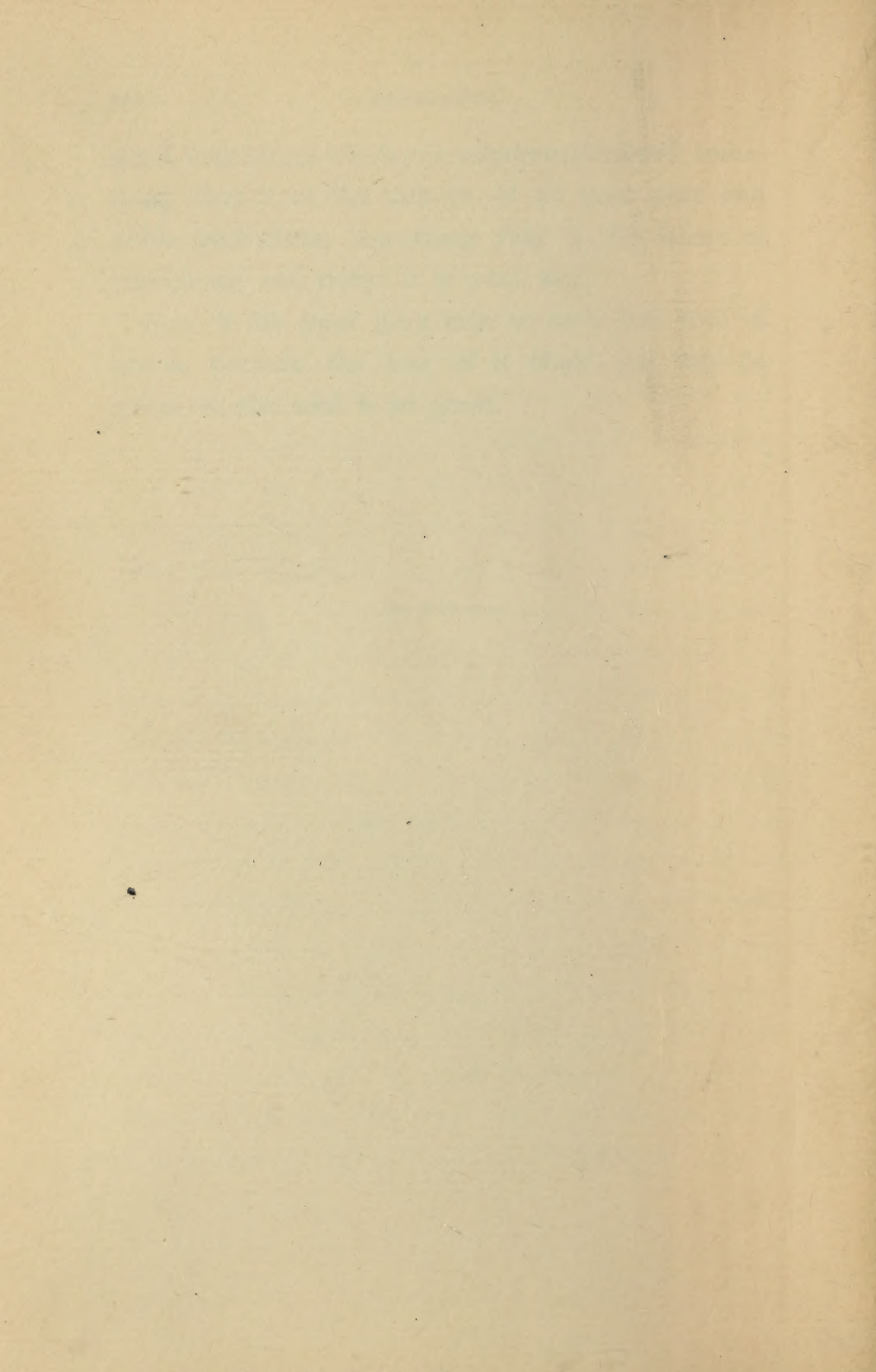
And now, dear reader, who may have had patience to follow me so far, I must take leave of you; and, whosoever you are, I must remind you once more that, to say the least, the odds are a thousand to one, that there is in you something marvellously

great, something which you cannot understand, something that is at the bottom of all your pure and noble aspirations, something that is the home of conscience and duty: it is your soul.

May it be your life's task to save that soul of yours, because the loss of it could not but be great, as the soul is so great.









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